

Palestinians observe Land Day in Lebanon

SIDON (AP) — Palestinians opposed to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Sunday marked Palestinian Land Day with calls for stepping up the struggle against Israel and halting peace talks.

Syrian-backed Palestinian factions set ablaze car tyres and Israeli and U.S. flags at the entrances to Lebanon's largest refugee camp in this main city in South Lebanon.

Thick black smoke drifted over 'Ain Al Hilweh camp, home to some 75,000 Palestinian refugees and one of 13 camps across Lebanon housing around 400,000 Palestinians.

Pro-Arafat Palestinian factions also marked the traditional protest day with a sit-in at the camp. Land Day is the anniversary of the killing of six Arabs protesting Israel's confiscation of Arab-owned land in northern Israel in 1976.

Abd Makdiah, a senior official in Sidon for the Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP) in Sidon,

called on the Palestinian National Authority to withdraw from negotiations with Israel.

Another hardline Palestinian leader, Munir Makdiah, said: "We will continue in offering martyrs who transform their bodies into human time bombs against the (Israeli) occupiers."

"There will be no peace as long as a state for the Jewish entity exists," he added.

A symbolic strike for Land Day was also observed in other camps in Sidon and the southern port city of Tyre.

The Iranian-backed Lebanese guerrilla group Hizbollah also issued a Land Day statement, which urged Palestinians inside the occupied territories to step up violence against occupation.

The statement, published in Sunday newspapers, said that "continuous and unfaltering jihad" provides the only chance of reaching a settlement between Israel and the Arabs.



Palestinian protesters burn Israeli and U.S. flags in the 'Ain al Hilweh refugee camp at the outskirts of the southern port city of Sidon on Sunday (AFP photo)

Over 200,000 landmines a major threat in Lebanon

MEDOUKHA, Lebanon (AFP) — More than 200,000 Russian, U.S., Chinese and Israeli landmines are still buried in Lebanon — remnants of the devastating 1975-1990 civil war and two Israeli invasions.

However, military officials said the figure does not cover the Israeli-occupied border zone in South Lebanon, where resistance guerrillas often plant explosive charges against Israeli troops who in turn lay landmines in the area.

The most endangered region remains the southern part of the eastern Bekaa Valley, where about 11 tonnes of landmines and unexploded shells lie beneath a 70-square-kilometre area inhabited by 20,000 people.

In 15 years, landmine explosions have claimed the lives of 189 people and disabled some 212 others, according to a survey by the Lebanese Ministry of Health.

The victims were farmers, shepherds, wood collectors, hunters or just visitors to the area.

Gaza, one of 15 villages in the area, has paid a high price: 15 dead and 18 disabled out of a population of 700.

Most of the mines were planted by the Israeli army along its front line with the Syrians and Palestinians before it pulled back to its self-declared "security zone" just north of the Jewish state's border in 1985.

The dangers in the area grew when a landfill, erected by the Israelis in 1983, collapsed over a large Palestinian arms depot.

"I have prohibited our 500 students from wandering around the school which is virtually located in a field of landmines," Issam Hamed, the principal of a primary school in Medoukha, told AFP.

"We live in an obsessive fear that any of our students could disobey the orders," she added.

Many still remember vividly the explosion that hit a truck transporting agricultural workers, just after the 1985 Israeli withdrawal, that left 22 dead and 15 others wounded.

In addition, there are no

signs to warn of any nearby danger.

"A shepherd has recently been injured by a bomb in the north of the valley of mines. Only then we came to know that it was a dangerous place," said an inhabitant of the area.

The Lebanese army, despite lacking maps showing the exact location of the landmines and adequate equipment to dispose of them, in 1991 launched a large clearing operation, mainly in Beirut's devastated city centre.

The army admits the difficulty of the task, knowing that some of the landmines have been buried for more than 15 years.

Three soldiers have been killed and seven others seriously wounded so far in the operation.

"We should declare the area around Medoukha and Gaza a disaster zone, win world assistance for the clearing operation and help the people disabled for life," said Nasser Abu Ltaif, who was charged with carrying out the survey by the Ministry of Health.

Turkish coalition frays under military pressure

ISTANBUL (R) — Demands by Turkey's powerful generals for a crackdown on Islamist activities have exposed the fault lines in the ruling coalition and revived doubts about the long-term survival of the 10-month-old government.

The run-up to Monday's regularly scheduled meeting of the military-dominated National Security Council touched off a war of words at the weekend between the coalition's Islamist and secularist wings.

At issue are 18 directives from the council, which is charged under the constitution with safeguarding the secular system, aimed at curbing the growing influence of religion in public life.

Laid down on Feb. 28, they include strict limits on Koranic education, enforcement of restrictions on headscarves and other forms of Muslim dress, as well as an assault on pro-Islamist media and business.

But the broader underlying questions — the role of the military in Turkish democracy, relations between mosque and state, the rise of civil society — are also in play.

"Either this government will go, or democracy will," said commentator Bilal Cetin, summing up the long-term outlook of a number of analysts.

"The consensus is that the chances of survival for both are decreasing steadily," Mr. Cetin wrote in the daily Yeni Yuzyl. Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, the first Islamist leader of the officially secular republic, reluctantly endorsed the council's orders for a crackdown.

However, aides from his Welfare Party have since hinted enforcement would be less than enthusiastic.

The more outspoken ministers of the junior partner True Path Party, secularist conservatives at least in name, meanwhile

pledged aggressive implementation.

For the second time in a month the government cancelled its weekly cabinet meeting, apparently to avoid a public rift before the session of the security council, which groups the top force commanders and senior ministers.

Talk of early elections, never far from the surface in Turkey, is once again in the air.

The agenda for Monday's meeting, which begins at 0630 GMT, has not been made public.

But enforcement of the Feb. 28 orders, most notably cuts in the religious education that the Islam-based Welfare Party sees as vital to its future growth, is expected to be discussed under the catch-all of "national security."

Already there have been feverish preparations on all sides.

The military brass held a series of consultations late last week and press leaks indicate the army, by far the most respected institution in Turkey, is prepared to see off any protests from Prime Minister Erbakan.

At the same time True Path and Welfare officials, in uneasy coalition since June 1996, have traded tough talk.

"The council's decisions will be enforced to the letter. If there is anyone who is trying to stop that, let them come forward and try," said Yalim Erez, trade and industry minister from the True Path Party.

Health Minister Yildirim Aktuna, also from True Path, sent shares on the Istanbul stock exchange tumbling on Thursday when he expressed doubts that Welfare would support the crackdown.

"For Welfare to accept the council decisions means giving up the policies which they have followed until today," Mr. Aktuna said.

Sudan state governor escapes mine blast with minor injuries

KHARTOUM (AP) — The governor of Sudan's Blue Nile state, Brigadier Babikir Jabir Khabala, suffered minor injuries in a landmine blast that tore off the legs of his driver, the official Sudan News Agency (SUNA) reported Sunday.

Brig. Khabala's car struck the mine Saturday evening as he toured the scene of recent fighting near the border with Ethiopia, the agency said. His bodyguard and a security official also were slightly wounded.

The incident happened 85 kilometres east of Damazin, where government troops have been fighting the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The report did not make clear who planted the mine.

The agency gave no details

of Brig. Khabala's injuries. It said the others wounded were being treated at Damazin hospital. A reporter and photographer from the agency were with Brig. Khabala's party but were not injured.

The southern rebels of the SPLA attacked in Blue Nile state along the border with Ethiopia in January in a renewed effort to bring down the Khartoum government. The government accuses Ethiopia of actively supporting the rebels, but Ethiopia denies it.

The SPLA has fought a series of Sudanese governments since 1983 to try to win more autonomy or independence for Christians and animists in southern Sudan. More than 1.3 million people have died in the fighting or ensuing famines.

Yemen places curbs on tourists as hostage stalemate continues

DUBAI (AFP) — Yemen restricted the movement of foreign tourists in the country as negotiations continued with tribesmen holding four Germans hostage in an eastern mountain village, officials said Sunday.

The Ministry of Tourism agreed new guidelines with travel agencies in a bid to protect the country's fragile tourism sector following the latest in a series of kidnappings by the country's notoriously unruly tribes.

Two elderly German couples were grabbed in Al Mahajja, around 200 kilometres east of Sanaa, as they returned to the capital from visiting archaeological

sites in the Marib region on Thursday.

Security services have surrounded Al Mahajja and several members of the kidnappers' Jihm tribe have been arrested to put pressure on the captors, according to the Ministry of Interior.

Tribal sources said the kidnapping was carried out by members of the Zaidi clan of the Jihm tribe, and that clan leader Sheikh Muhammad Al Zaidi had been leading a mediation effort with the kidnappers since Friday.

However, since an official statement on Friday the authorities have imposed a total news blackout on the kidnapping, the third time

tribesmen have seized foreigners this year.

More than 80 foreigners have been kidnapped since 1993 by tribesmen hoping to exact ransom payments or concessions from the government, and the authorities fear the trend may cause terminal damage to the tourism sector.

The hard currency earned from tourism is vital to Yemen, which is one of the poorest countries in the world and relies on donor nations to sustain economic reforms started in 1995.

Travel agents said they have now agreed with the government to restrict journeys by tourists outside Sanaa.

All trips to the central

Shabwa region and Theomani border province of Mahara have been suspended, said Abdul Wahab Mohammad of the Yemen Arab Tourism Agency (YATA).

He told AFP in Dubai that the popular archaeological sites of the Marib region, the scene of several recent kidnappings, could only be visited in large groups with an army escort.

Mr. Mohammad said the measures would stay in force until the April 27 general elections.

The authorities have accused the kidnappers of deliberately trying to sabotage the elections — the first since the country's civil war in 1994.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh said late Saturday that "on the eve of the legislative elections, all historic achievement is being hindered by some problems" — a reference to the kidnapping.

Earlier this month seven German motorcycle tourists were kidnapped by 50 armed tribesmen near Tarim, 750 kilometres east of Sanaa, and held by members of the Manahil mountain tribe, north of the oil-rich Wadi Massila area.

They were freed 10 days later, after which the Yemeni government denied that it satisfied the captors' demand of a ransom of \$7 million.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UAE sends aid team to Palestinians

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said on Sunday it was sending a team from its Red Crescent Society to the West Bank and Gaza Strip to buy \$3 million worth of food for Palestinians. The aid was ordered by UAE president Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan last week with the aim of supporting the Palestinian people, the official news agency WAM said. The Red Crescent team would leave on Monday to buy food from the Palestinian market to "ensure quick delivery and activate the domestic economy," the Red Crescent chief, Khalifa Al Suweidi, told WAM. In Sharjah, the third-largest UAE emirate, its ruler Sheikh Sultan Ben Nohman Al Qassimi announced Saturday the donation of \$1 million for Palestinians to build an orphanage and expand Al Ahli hospital in Hebron.

James Baker to visit W. Sahara

ALGIERS (AFP) — The U.N. special envoy for the Western Sahara, James Baker, will visit the territory next month, it was announced here Sunday. The visit will probably take place between April 20 and 22, said BaShir Mustapha Sayed, the Polisario Front's foreign affairs emissary. It will be the first trip to the region by the former U.S. secretary of state since his nomination as special envoy in March. Mr. Baker is to try to relaunch the peace process in the former Spanish colony whose sovereignty has been disputed by the Polisario Liberation Front and Morocco since 1975.

Plane skids off runway at Iranian island

CAIRO (AP) — A passenger jet skidded off a runway during a landing in bad weather at the Iranian resort island of Kish. Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported Sunday. None of the 150 passengers on board was hurt, it said. The problem occurred Saturday when the jet, which had taken off from Tehran, was landing at the airport on Kish island, which is 1,025 kilometres south of the capital, IRNA said. The agency, monitored in Cairo, said the plane landed in "unfavorable weather conditions" including heavy rainfall and skidded on landing. It quoted Bani Adami, managing director of the Kish airport, as saying the incident was under investigation.

Lebanon, Cyprus switch to summer time

NICOSIA (AFP) — Lebanon and Cyprus moved forward an hour to summer time on Sunday along with many European countries.

The new time, three hours ahead of GMT, will remain in force in Lebanon until the last Saturday of September and in Cyprus until the last Saturday of October.

Jordan has announced it will move to summer time, three hours ahead of GMT, on April 4.

Syria and Egypt will move to summer time, three hours ahead of GMT, on April 1 and May 9 respectively.

Israel is three hours ahead of GMT, and Iran is four-and-a-half hours ahead of GMT, both already moved to summer time on March 21.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates keep winter time throughout the year, with the UAE and Oman four hours ahead of GMT and the others three hours ahead.

Yemen sticks to winter time three hours ahead of GMT throughout the year.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Captain Planet
14:30 Flintstones
15:00 French Programmes
16:00 Nature's Inventions
16:25 Deep Water Haven
16:50 Series — Ocean Girl
17:00 Doc. — Extra Dimensions
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — "One Foot in the Grave"
20:00 Doc. — Discover Magazine
20:30 Drama — Murder She Wrote
21:10 Drama — Highlander
22:00 News in English
22:25 Under Suspicion
23:00 Middle March

PRAYER TIMES

04:04 Fajr
05:22 (Sunrise) Duha
11:40 Dhuhur
15:12 'Asr
17:58 Maghrib
19:16 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swifelh. Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 637785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757 Terra Sancta Church Tel.

62236

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Warm weather conditions will prevail today with temperatures becoming slightly above average and winds southeasterly moderate. On Tuesday, temperatures are expected to rise further as relative humidity, dry, and dusty weather conditions will prevail and winds becoming southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate and

seus calm.

Min/Max. temp.

Amman 07/22

Aqaba 12/29

Deserts 05/24

Jordan Valley 10/27

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 21, Aqaba 27 Humidity

readings: Amman 31 per cent.

Aqaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Jamal Jwarab 847351

Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 885446

Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab 602507

Dr. Ayman Al Muhtaseb 875748

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 778336

Al Asema pharmacy 637055

Nakrouh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484

Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Hilal Al Sayyid 986702

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 669131

Emergency 630341

Rescue Police 192.62111.63777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53300

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 81381332

Khalidi Maternity 64428116

Akileh Maternity 6424412

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 6672279

The Islamic, Abdali 66612637

Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7771013

Al-Bashir 77511126

Army, Marka 89161115

Queen Alia Hospital 60224050

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (0

Prince chairs applied university Royal Commission meeting

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, cultural advisor to His Majesty King Hussein, chaired the first meeting of the Royal Commission for the Balqa Applied University and approved the formation of the university's executive committee.

The commission named Deputy Prime Minister for Services and Minister of Administrative Development Abdullah Ensour as president, Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri as member, and Dr. Victor Billeh as member and acting president of the university.

It also named Mohammad Samir Halawani as secretary.

The commission emphasised the importance of studying labour market requirements in order that university curricula conform to such.

It stressed the significance of close coordination between the university and local industry, community colleges and universities.

The Balqa Applied University was established by a Royal Decree issued on Aug. 22 of last year. King Hussein named Prince Ghazi as chairman of the university's Royal Commission as well as its board of trustees.

The new university is slated to include undergraduate faculties and community colleges linked to various government departments as well as adopt those run by the Jordan Armed Forces.

In his message to the government, the King said the applied university should supervise community college progress in regulating academic and vocational levels and encourage qualified students to pursue vocational and technical occupations.

Defence contests court jurisdiction in lese majeste case

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The defence, in the case of two journalists accused of lese majeste, Sunday re-contested the State Security's Court jurisdiction in the case and asked for their clients full acquittal of all charges.

Journalist Nahed Hattar is standing trial on charges of distributing articles which slandered both His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan, while journalist Abdullah Abu Ruman is accused of verbally slandering of the King.

Defence Attorney Faisal Batayneh said in his 10-page closing argument that his client's articles were not intended to slander the King but rather criticize the government's performance and policies.

"My client concentrated on an analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the government's policies and performances based on his judgements of right and wrong," he said.

Mr. Batayneh also requested that one of the charges, which the military prosecutor mentioned in his closing argument, accusing Mr. Hattar of receiving cash from abroad to write the aforementioned articles, be omitted.

"The military prosecution's allegations are both dangerous and insulting and I question the prosecution's failure to mention this issue either in its charge sheet or during the court session," Mr. Batayneh stated.

He referred to earlier witnesses testifying for the defence, including former Prime Minister Taher

Masri, who earlier told the court that an article Mr. Hattar wrote contained no statements about the King and Deputy Toujan Faisal who testified that the newspaper's editors would pre-view columns and that if these editors felt that any material therein was slanderous they would prevent such articles from publication.

Charges against the two stem from articles they wrote during and after the unrest in August over the hike in bread prices.

Some of these articles were published in weeklies, while others were seized during a police raid at the journalists' office.

Defence Attorney Zayed Radaideh, who is defending Mr. Abu Ruman, said in his closing argument that the prosecution failed to present any evidence

against his client.

In addition, he said, the prosecution based its charges on an article which was written by his client containing no slanderous material and furthermore illegally seized by security forces during the raid.

"My client was merely writing about his own feelings regarding the bread prices in an article kept locked in his drawer," Mr. Radaideh stated.

He further charged that the prosecution misinterpreted the meaning and thoughts written in the article.

Justices Yousef Faouri, Aref Syouf and Salem Saoudi set April 15 to either issue a verdict or further study the case.

UNDP to assist Kingdom in minimising pollution

AMMAN (Petra) — The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative in Jordan, Jürgen Lissner Sunday visited Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan and stated that his office is ready to offer Jordan grants to help combat all forms of pollution.

Mr. Lissner said that, as part of that assistance, UNDP environment experts would be available to help spread public awareness on the dangers of pollution and what can be done to avoid such.

The UN official reviewed the survey part of a programme designed to help Jordan minimise pollution with Mr. Kreishan.

The survey will be conducted by ministry teams in all environment-related sectors, including health and energy.

It will help pave the way for an integrated

strategy to be adopted by the Kingdom in the 21st century, according to a ministry official.

Messrs. Lissner and Kreishan also discussed ways in which Jordan can coordinate measures with the Palestine Environment Authority through the General Corporation for Environmental Protection.

Meanwhile in Aqaba, a shipment of 57 items of machinery and equipment arrived as a gift from the Japanese government to Jordan. The implements will be used for the disposal of dangerous waste.

According to Samih Abu Amerieh, director of the Department of Municipal Affairs in Aqaba, the equipment worth \$11 million, includes bulldozers, tractors, dump trucks and integrated workshops for maintenance work.

Doctor held in woman's death

AMMAN (J.T.) — A 65-year old gynaecologist was apprehended last week in connection with the death of a woman, three months pregnant, according to an official source.

The official source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the authorities apprehended the doctor.

The woman who visited the doctor regularly apparently wished to have an abortion, he said.

"The doctor agreed to perform the abortion for JD 100, the source stated, and during the operation the woman passed away and the police was notified."

Coroners later attributed the cause of the death to the use of unsterilised medical equipment.

According to the official, the gynaecologist, identified only as M.S., was officially charged with performing an abortion, illegal in Jordan, and will be referred to the Amman Criminal Court in the next few weeks. — R.H.

Ministry denies report alleging possible reduction of bread prices in Kingdom

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Finance Sunday denied a report in the Arabic daily Al Dustour which described government plans to reduce bread prices and annul a cash subsidy which the government initiated in August of last year.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra quoted a ministry source as emphasising that the Ministry of Finance is continuing with previous government regulations regarding cash subsidies for Jordanian citizens to offset an increase in

bread prices.

Al Dustour stated that the government is currently considering the possibility of reducing the price of a kilogram of bread from 210 fils to 150 fils and that only those who currently benefit from financial assistance from the National Aid Fund (NAF) will continue to receive a cash subsidy.

According to the report, the government began to consider the reduction in response to a dip in world wheat prices from \$275 to \$200 a tonne last year.

Al Dustour also reported that a parliamentary committee, formed to study bread and animal feed prices, suggested that the government of former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti decrease bread prices to 150 fils a kilo but failed to win official support.

An increase in bread and fodder prices, following the government's termination of subsidies for both, triggered protests in several towns in southern Jordan last summer.

At the time, the then-government announced

that it would compensate Jordanians for the increase through a cash subsidy of JD 1.28 per person, per month.

In its denial of the Al Dustour report, the source stated that the Ministry of Finance is currently preparing for the distribution of cash subsidies to livestock breeders in the second week of April.

It will do such through the Housing Bank, the source said, and distribution dates will be announced at a later date.

Armouti appointed to lead Jordanian participation in German exposition

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has appointed Dr. Mazen Armouti, both advisor to HRH Crown Prince Hassan and president of the Institute of Diplomacy as Jordan's commissioner-general for the Hannover Universal Exposition (Expo 2000) in Germany, according to an Institute of Diplomacy statement.

Dr. Majali announced his appointment in a letter addressed to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in which he informed him of Jordan's decision to take part in the five-month exposition, expected to be the most elaborate international event at the close of the century, the statement said.

The overall theme of Expo 2000 will be "Mankind, Nature, Technology" and will include cultural, scientific, tourist and envi-

ronmental activities in addition to conferences covering various facets of international relations, according to the statement.

Dr. Armouti will also chair a national committee to oversee the planning and organisation of Jordanian participation in the event.

The committee will also be assigned the task of organising "Jordanian weeks" in Germany to be held before and after the exposition to boost bilateral relations and strengthen ties at the political, economic, cultural, scientific and tourist levels, the statement said.

Dentists to convene in Amman in two conferences

AMMAN (Petra) — The 15th Jordanian Dentists Conference and the 20th Conference of the Arab Dentists Federation (ADF) will both open tomorrow at the Palace of Culture of Al Hussein Youth City under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein.

According to President of the Jordan Dentists Association (JDA) Dr. Said Abu Meizar, a total of 1,000 dentists from 13 countries are expected to attend the meetings which are organised by the JDA in conjunction with the ADF.

Dr. Abu Meizar, chairman of the conference, said that during their three days of deliberations, participants will review 100 reports in 36 sessions, covering dental services and surgical operations and will also visit Al Bashir hospital's dental clinic.

Auxiliary to the meetings, the JDA has arranged for an exhibition of dental equipment and medicine by domestic and international firms, he added.

The meetings will be of benefit to all attending dentists as well as dental surgeons that they might exchange information and views and establish direct contacts among themselves for the benefit of their patients, Dr. Abu Meizar stated.

Participants will be accompanied on visits to a number of medical institutions as well as tourist and archaeological sites upon the conclusion of their meetings, he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Conference to focus on tooth embedding

AMMAN (Petra) — A two-day international dental conference will be held at Al Hussein Medical Centre today with dentists from 18 foreign countries participating. Participants to the conference will discuss recent dental embedding techniques. Head of the Dental Department at Al Hussein Medical Centre Yasin Husban will present a report covering the centre's experience over the past two years in the field of teeth embedding. Participating in the conference will be dentists from Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Yemen, Sweden, the United States, Iran and Jordan.

FAO official arrives today

AMMAN (Petra) — Regional Information and Communication Officer at the Rome-based Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) Michael Haji arrives here today on a five-day visit to Jordan during which he will discuss issues related to the Rome Declaration and others related to the World Food Programme (WFP) conference with Ministry of Agriculture Secretary General Ghaleb Abu Orabi. The two will discuss measures to ensure food security, combating poverty and increasing food production.

Iraqi delegation visits Irbid

AMMAN (Petra) — An Iraqi trade delegation, currently visiting the Kingdom, Sunday called on the Irbid Chamber of Commerce, where they met with its president, Mohammad Shouma, and members. Mr. Shouma called for the expansion of commercial exchange protocol between Jordan and Iraq, for enhancing cooperation between entrepreneurs in both countries and for implementing joint ventures. The Iraqi delegation visited the Jordan University of Science and Technology, and Al Hassan Industrial Estates where they were briefed on the volume of investments therein.

Workers injured in ceiling collapse

AMMAN (J.T.) — Five workers were injured Sunday when a ceiling collapsed near Al Rabieh Circle in Amman, Civil Defence Department (CDD) officials said. Second Lieutenant Aref Tarawneh told the Jordan Times that the accident occurred when the five workers, all Egyptian nationals, were pouring concrete on the second floor ceiling of the building. "There was not enough support to hold the weight of the cement mixture and the roof collapsed," Lieut. Tarawneh said. All five men suffered fractures and bruises and were taken, by CDD ambulances, to Al Bashir Hospital.

What's Going On

GERMAN-AMERICAN FILM WEEK

"Western Union" (English) at the American Centre/Abdoun at 5:00 p.m.

AMMAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

French performance entitled "La Cabaret du Petit Matis" and Lebanese performance entitled "Modern Radio and Poetry/Professional 96" respectively at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. at the Royal Cultural Centre.

LECTURE

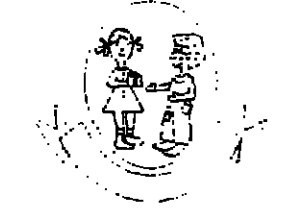
"The Conflict in the Relationship Between the Educated and the Authority in the Arab World" (in Arabic) by Dr. Wamid Nazmi at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

Artworks by Egyptian artist Jamil Shafiq entitled "Black and White" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 687598), until April 10.

Hurry .. Hurry ..
Only Three Days Left ..

I Love You My Friend
You make me happy at EID



DAY SEVEN

**UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
PRINCESS RANIA AL-ABDULLAH**

JORDAN RIVER FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Is organizing a fund raising campaign

From March 25 until April 3, 1997
Between 8:00am - 7:00pm

You can deposit your contribution to A special Jordan River For Development Projects' bank
account number 48/50493/20 - At The Arab Jordan Investment Bank

Donated gifts could be sent to one of the following locations:-

Jordan River Designs' showroom (See map)

Aramex (Mecca St./Infront of Dahiat Al Hussein)

Aramex (Irbid)

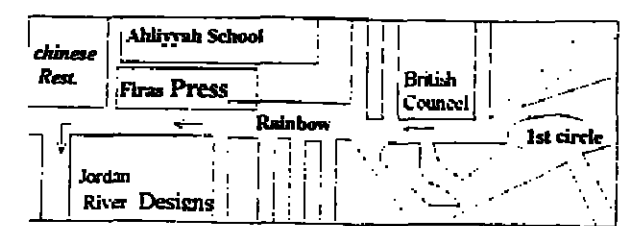
McDonald's (Mecca St.)

Al Ahlia Abela

Iman Early Learning Center (Abdoun)

Safeway

Fakherdin Restaurant



For further information call 613081 or Fax 613083

India's Congress withdraws support to Deve Gowda

NEW DELHI (R) — India's Congress Party withdrew its make-or-break support to Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's centre-left alliance Sunday and staked a claim to form the country's next government.

It was not immediately clear if the Congress decision meant the shaky nine-month-old government led by Mr. Deve Gowda would have to resign and call a snap mid-term election.

The bombshell Congress announcement came in the middle of rare official talks between India and Pakistan and threatened to stall Mr. Deve Gowda's budget for fiscal 1997/98 (April-March), still pending in parliament after it was unveiled on Feb. 28.

There was no immediate comment from government officials.

The news sent shock waves through the country's financial community. Share prices in Bombay fell sharply in off-market kerb deals. "This is something totally unexpected. There's trouble ahead that doesn't look like it will be easily resolved," said Ravi

Gopalakrishnan, head of sales at UBS securities.

"I met the President (Shankar Dayal Sharma) today and told him that we are withdrawing support to the United Front government and I also staked our claim to form a government," Congress President Sitaram Kesri told a news conference.

"We have told the president that the support we had extended to the government on the hope that they will support secular forces which has not come about so we are withdrawing our support," Mr. Kesri added.

Gulam Nabi Azad, a senior Congress Party official told reporters: "The Congress Party is not in favour of any fresh elections. The Congress Parliamentary Party has requested the party president (Kesri) to formally write to the president to stake the party's claim."

Mr. Kesri, who became Congress president in September after former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao was forced to resign the post over corruption charges, was expected to formally stake his

claim before Sharma Monday, Congress politicians said.

But he did not immediately appear to have the support of several key Congress leaders, including influential former Defence Minister Sharad Pawar. Mr. Rao too was not present at the party meeting that formally endorsed Mr. Kesri's stand Sunday.

The United News of India quoted Pawar, regarded as a supporter of Mr. Deve Gowda's government, as saying he was not aware of the Congress decision to bring down the government.

Mr. Azad said the Congress might amend some of the budget proposals of Mr. Deve Gowda's government in case the Congress succeeded in its bid to head a new coalition.

"We will see what changes are needed and implement them," he told Reuters.

Agriculture Minister Chaturanan Mishra, a Communist member of the government, told Reuters he felt Mr. Deve Gowda should resign. "The government was dependent on the Congress Party's support

and if that support is withdrawn it is logical that the government should resign."

India's oldest political machine, Congress is reeling from a string of financial scandals dogging its leading politicians.

Congress officials said the withdrawal decision followed "attempts by the United Front" to split the Congress Party in the key north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

The rightwing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed a coalition government in the state earlier this month, thwarting Congress attempts to rule the crucial region which sends 85 deputies to the 545-member lower house of parliament.

Mr. Deve Gowda's minority 15-member United Front alliance which groups free-traders, Communists and centrists and controls some 178 deputies in the lower house, was formed in June 1996 after inconclusive national elections.

The Congress, which has 142 deputies, supported the government but was not part of the ruling alliance and held no cabinet post.



A Cambodian woman cries in horror beside the bodies of victims shortly after a bomb and grenade attack at a political rally outside the parliament in Phnom Penh on Sunday (Reuters photo)

Attackers kill 7 at Cambodia protest

PHNOM PENH (R) — Seven people were killed and many injured in a grenade attack on a demonstration led by opposition leader Sam Rainsy in the Cambodian capital Sunday, police said.

Police said four grenades ripped through the crowd of 150-200 demonstrators outside the Cambodian national assembly around 8.30 a.m. (0130 GMT), but contradicted earlier reports that a bomb had been placed in a food vendor's trolley.

Sam Rainsy, leader of the officially unrecognised Khmer Nation Party (KNP), narrowly escaped injury in the blast and told reporters later, "this is a setback for democracy in Cambodia."

A municipal police officer, who did not give his name, told reporters seven people had been killed and 25 injured, including 19 seriously. Hospital officials said many others had come in to seek treatment for injuries.

After the attack dying and injured men and women lay on the road and pavement and

in a park opposite the parliament building as armed police arrived in force to seal off all roads leading to the assembly. Blood and placards littered the ground.

It took more than half an hour to take away all the injured, including some who were badly hurt. They were ferried to hospitals on the back of police pick-ups and in an ambulance.

One of the injured was American Ron Abney, 55, of Cochran, Georgia, who works for the International Republican Institute, a body linked to the Republican Party. Mr. Abney was wounded in the thigh by shrapnel and told Reuters he was to be evacuated to Singapore for treatment. Khieu Kanharith, information secretary of state, confirmed the death toll of seven and said that 111 people had been injured.

Ministry of Interior spokesman Sok Phal said the demonstration had been authorised by the ministry and police had launched an investigation into the attack.

Sam Rainsy, in a blood-stained shirt and jacket, said his bodyguards Han Mony and KNP steering committee member Chhet Daravuth were among the dead, along with at least two female garment workers.

He accused co-Premier Hun Sen of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) of being behind the attack, the first against an opposition demonstration since the KNP started launching anti-government demonstrations last year.

"It was a well-planned attack. These attacks were aimed to kill people. I was leading the demonstration, so I presume if there was any attack to kill people, they would aim at the leader first," he said, adding that he had been very lucky to escape.

One witness said the grenades had been thrown from a car that sped past the demonstration, but Sam Rainsy claimed at least one had been thrown from the national assembly compound and another by someone in the crowd.

"I think since the (1993 general) election, this is the worst attack. This is a very clear indication that the situation is deteriorating very dramatically," Sam Rainsy said.

He said the aim of the attack was to dissuade people from taking part in further protests.

But Sam Rainsy, who was sacked as finance minister in late 1994 for his criticism of the government and expelled from parliament a year later, pledged to continue struggling for democracy and human rights.

He had called Sunday's demonstration to protest against the judiciary's lack of independence and alleged subservience to the CPP, which formed an uneasy coalition government with the royalist FUNCINPEC Party after U.N.-run general elections in 1993.

Sam Rainsy formed the KNP in November 1995 and last February joined an alliance with FUNCINPEC to compete against the CPP in elections expected in November next year.

Violence surges in Indian Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India (R) — More violence flared in India's Restive Jammu and Kashmir state Sunday, a day after a car bomb blast killed 16 people and wounded about 70.

Police said suspected separatist rebels lobbed a grenade at a security patrol in the busy Amira Kadal market in the heart of Srinagar, the state's summer capital. It missed the patrol and exploded on the road, wounding four civilians.

Nine policemen were wounded earlier when a device contained in a pouch tied to the body of a slain Muslim militant exploded by accident at a police station in Kupwara, near the Pakistani border, 87 kilometres north of Srinagar, police said.

They had been examining the body of a guerrilla killed in an overnight clash when the device went off.

"Two of the injured are serious and we are shifting them to Srinagar military hospital," a police spokesman said.

Kupwara, located in a sensitive border district, is a stronghold of Kashmiri separatist guerrillas.

The latest trouble in the disputed Himalayan territory coincided with talks between Indian and Pakistani diplomats in New Delhi, the first such formal discussions for three years.

The last round of India-Pakistan talks collapsed in January 1994 over Muslim-majority Kashmir, claimed by both countries.

More than 20,000 people have been killed since a revolt in the Indian-ruled part of the territory began in 1990.

A police spokesman said violence had surged this month, with 192 people killed, including 90 militants and 12 members of the para-

military security forces. There had been 17 explosions and 18 grenade attacks. He gave no figures for February.

On Saturday, a car bomb blew up in a crowded bus station in Jammu, the state's winter capital, killing 16 people and wounding about 70, police and hospital doctors said.

Farooq Abdullah, chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, has accused Pakistan of being behind the attack.

"This dastardly act was sponsored by Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) and its agents with the intention of dividing the people on communal lines," he said.

"The ISI doesn't want normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan and is... Trying to create trouble in a bid to divide communities to further its ends," his statement added.

Police said they had found a severed head and torso at the scene of Saturday's blast, bringing the death toll to 16.

Hospital doctor Rakesh Gaudutra told Reuters about 70 people injured in the blast had received treatment, of whom six were in critical condition. About 20 had been discharged.

A five-year-old boy with a bandaged thigh lay crying in pain. He was sharing a bed with his injured father. The right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party called for a general strike in Jammu Monday in protest at the bombing. Jammu is populated mainly by Hindus.

"I was drinking tea and suddenly there was a big bang and I could see parts of human bodies hurtling through the air," said Bhushan Kumar Gupta, the owner of a petrol station next to the bus station. "It was like an earthquake."

Peru hostages spend Easter under guns

LIMA (R) — The 72 men held captive by Peruvian Marxist rebels at the Japanese ambassador's house looked set to make Easter Sunday their 103rd day under their captors' guns as negotiations for their release hit a low point.

"We still don't foresee a peaceful solution soon," Tupac

Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) leader Nestor Cerna said on Saturday by walkie-talkie from within the residence.

"The positions are still not really drawing close."

The hostages were captured on Dec. 17 during an MRTA raid on a cocktail party thrown by Japanese Ambassador Morihisa Aoki.

The hostages, including Aoki, two Peruvian cabinet ministers, generals, businessmen, President Alberto Fujimori's brother, Pedro, the Bolivian ambassador and two dozen Japanese citizens, have also spent Christmas and New Year's in the mansion.

In his communication from the compound, Cerna denied speculation by diplomats, officials and the press that the MRTA paved the way for a deal with the government by accepting a Cuban offer for political asylum for himself and the other rebels.

"I repeat that we have not come here to look for asylum or a trip abroad," Cerna insisted, repeating his main demand — freedom for their 450 jailed comrades.

"While you hear statements that totally deny the possibility of that (release), the peaceful solution is very far away," he said.

As the hostages prepared to receive a special mass and chocolate eggs for Easter, Archbishop Juan Cipriani, one of the three

peace guarantors operating as negotiators, sought to bring them solace. He said headway was being made and blamed the press for the prevailing sense of pessimism.

"I can tell you progress has been made," he told local radio. "Sometimes, when I read the papers, they make me sick."

Amid the sense of gloom in the 15-week-old crisis, the only recent tangible improvement in the situation of the hostages came on Saturday, when rebels chopped down a tree that was blocking a window.

Soon after that, Peruvian Foreign Minister Francisco Tudela, one of the hostages, made his first appearance in weeks. Later, Aoki and another unidentified hostage also were glimpsed looking out the window.

Fujimori has ruled out releasing any MRTA prisoners, and vehemently underlined in a speech last week that no "terrorists" should be allowed to walk free.

Diplomats, the media and officials have been saying all week the government and the MRTA were drawing closer to an accord involving asylum in Cuba and possibly the release of some lower-level prisoners.

Cerna said: "The only thing I can tell you is that the conversations continue."

The two sides last met face-to-face on March 12, and since then the three-member commission of guarantors has been trying to negotiate a solution.

Two of the guarantors — archbishop Cipriani and Red Cross representative Michel Minnig — entered the residence on Saturday for further talks with the MRTA. They left without comment to reporters.

Burma keeps security tight for Lao premier; unrest dies down

RANGOON (AFP) — Burmese authorities kept security tight for a visit by Lao Prime Minister Khamtay Siphandone as communal unrest in the capital appeared to be winding down, witnesses said.

Security forces surrounding the official visit supplemented those stationed near mosques and monasteries to stem a rash of attacks on Muslim property which began two weeks ago in the central Burmese city of Mandalay. Rangoon has been quiet for the past few days after a series of incidents in which Buddhist monks stoned and vandalised mosques and private Muslim homes, but curfews apparently remained in place in Mandalay and Toungoo.

Dozens of Muslim properties have been targeted in cities across the country, including Pegu, where Khamtay was taken Sunday after signing agreements on

drug suppression and border management the previous day. Khamtay is in Burma on an official visit with General Than Shwe, chairman of the military's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the state-run radio Rangoon reported.

The most serious incidents in the latest unrest have occurred in Mandalay and Rangoon, where at least 100 monks have been picked up for questioning and religious examinations scheduled for the coming week have been cancelled.

SLORC officials have blamed the unrest on elements out to ruin its bid to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose membership includes the majority Muslim Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Burma, Laos and fellow observer Cambodia may be admitted as full members of ASEAN as early as July.

China, Taiwan jostle over Central American ties

SAN JOSE (AFP) — China and Taiwan jostled to improve their commercial and political ties with Central American nations this week, fanning the flames of the two Asian nations' historic dispute.

China wants to establish diplomatic links with the seven countries of Central America. Chinese ambassador to the United Nations Qin Huasun said here Tuesday.

Mr. Qin, traveling with Chinese businessmen looking into buying Costa Rican coffee, sugar and bananas, said he hopes to get support from Costa Rica to sway other Central American countries to improve ties with Beijing.

"We want to normalise diplomatic relations with all countries with whom we haven't had such ties... particularly with Central America," said Mr. Qin, who met with Costa Rican Foreign Minister Fernando Naranjo.

Mr. Naranjo said Central America would maintain its diplomatic ties with Taiwan even as it increases trade with China, which has a potential market of 1,200 million people and enjoys 10 per cent annual economic growth.

But Taiwan — which has stepped up investment in the region over the last few months — saw the initiative as an effort to fray its ties to the isthmus.

Central America's seven countries — Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama — are among 30 nations around the world that recognise Taiwan.

The Taiwanese government has maintained it is the legitimate Chinese government since the Nationalist Party fled the mainland in 1949 and settled on the island off the Chinese coast. The communist government in Beijing considers Taiwan a renegade province.

Both are interested in investing in the Panama Canal where the United States hands over control to Panama in 2000.

Taiwan's foreign ministry has said the island nation's foreign minister will travel to the region sometime in the next few months to counteract China's initiatives there.

Panamanian Foreign Minister Ricardo Arias said his government's decision to invite Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to a congress on the canal had strained relations with Beijing.

Taiwan-Panama relations will be seriously harmed if Mr. Lee participates in the conference on the canal, according to the head of China's Trade Development Office, who said Beijing had convinced U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan not to attend. Guatemala's endorsement of Taiwan's bid for U.N. membership and Taiwanese Foreign Minister John Chang's presence at the Guatemalan peace accords signing last December prompted China to veto sending a U.N. force there to help implement the agreements.

After intense negotiations involving third parties, Guatemala and China reached a secret agreement on Taiwan, and China agreed to lift its "punishment" of the Central American country, U.N. sources said.

Nicaragua — the only country to have close relations with China under the leftwing Sandinista regime — broke off ties in 1990 when violent Chamorro came to power. She established relations with Taiwan.

Costa Rica already has an "intense" cooperation programme with Taiwan, Mr. Naranjo explained Tuesday.

Nevertheless there are plans to open a central American trade office in Beijing, Mr. Naranjo said.

Sri Lankan government rejects Tiger overture as 'nothing new'

COLOMBO (Agencies) — Sri Lanka Sunday flatly rejected an offer of conditional peace talks by Tamil Tiger guerrillas as "nothing new" and reiterated that the rebels must lay down arms to end the drawn out war.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said in remarks published Sunday that they were prepared for third-party mediated talks provided security forces withdraw from territory captured from them.

"There is nothing new in the Tiger offer," a government spokesman said. "We do not take this seriously. There is nothing new in what they are saying. It is the same song only the

singer is different."

The government spokesman said the main stumbling block to negotiations was the "intransigence" of the LTTE to lay down arms and agree to a specific time frame to conclude talks.

The Sunday Times weekly quoted middle-level LTTE leader, Shaker Master, as saying in the eastern district of Batticaloa that they wanted third party mediation to end the conflict which has killed more than 50,000 since 1972.

Last week, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgala turned down an offer of good offices by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to bring about a set-

tlement between the Tiger and the Colombo government.

Sri Lanka has also rejected offers by Western governments and Australia to intervene saying that the problem was an internal issue.

Tiger area leader Master had repeated the LTTE call for the army to withdraw from the northern peninsula of Jaffna, the former bastion of the Tigers captured by security forces last year.

The government has already rejected the demand as totally unacceptable.

Instead, the government has escalated its military campaign against the LTTE while unveiling a political package aimed at granting

greater autonomy to minority Tamils in exchange for ethnic peace.

The Tigers have already rejected the controversial peace plan but moderates among the Tamil and majority Sinhalese community feel that the political concessions will marginalise hardliners on both sides of the divide.

A 100-day truce between President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government and the LTTE ended abruptly with the rebels blowing up two gun ships at a naval facility in the northeast of the country in April 1995.

Thereafter, bitter fighting erupted but security forces captured the Jaffna peninsula, regarded as the fountain

head of Tamil separatism in the country.

LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran said in November last year that he will keep up his guerrilla campaign for an independent state called Eelam despite the military setbacks.

Prabhakaran has urged his supporters to fight on saying there was no liberation without death, destruction, bloodshed and sacrifices.

"We cannot gain our rights by pleading with the Sinhala rulers," he said. "History has not recorded any liberation struggle that has won without fighting, without bloodshed, without death and destruction, without sacrifices."

In another development, the state-owned Sunday Observer newspaper reported that police have arrested a senior Tamil Tiger rebel suicide squad member planning to assassinate President Kumaratunga.

The 26-year-old suspect, Anthonypillai Nesarajah, also known as Major Rahu Appa, had videotaped temple trees, Kumaratunga's official residence, from a high-rise building in the capital Colombo, the paper said.

He had also revealed plans to attack helicopters used to transport senior government officials, it said.

A military spokesman said he had no information on the report.

U.N. struggles to aid refugees in Zaire

GOMA, Zaire (R) — United Nations and other aid workers on Sunday launched a big operation to help about 20,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees comply with orders to leave a temporary camp close to Kisangani.

The U.N. refugee agency said the rebels who seized Zaire's third city two weeks ago had ordered the refugees at Lulu, seven kilometres south of Kisangani, to move back from the city towards a site 25 kilometres to the south.

The refugees have been stranded in eastern Zaire after a four-month trek through the jungle to escape the rebel war.

The rebels gave no reason for their ultimatum to the refugees. But they had earlier warned the refugees not to try to enter Kisangani and said instead they return to their homeland, Rwanda.

The decision to close the camp was disclosed a day after Zaire rebels denied the United Nations World Food Programme access to Lulu to bring food.

U.N. officials said they were doing all they could to help the refugees comply with the order to move out of Lulu by providing transport and other facilities.

Kilian Kleinschmidt of the office of the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR said on Sunday: "They have to move today, otherwise there is a risk they could be pushed back by the military."

While he was speaking, workers from a range of aid organisations were loading up a special train in Kisangani with 100 tonnes of food, medical supplies, blankets and other essentials.

The train was to deliver the aid materials to up to 40,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees gathered at a point on the railway line 41 kilometres south of Kisangani.

Aid agencies had earlier warned that thousands of these refugees trapped near the railway line could die unless they were quickly provided with food, water and medicine.

At least 500 refugees have died since arriving at the village of Ubilo 82 kilometres south of the city on March 16, according to the Zairean Red Cross.

And the rebels have killed about 100 armed refugees in clashes since taking Kisangani, according to Red Cross officials.

Rebels from the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL) have seized control of about a quarter of the country since last October in a war to oust ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Negotiations between the ADFL and envoys of Mobutu could start early this week, probably in South Africa, according to an alliance spokesman.

Senior ADFL officials say members of the former Rwandan Government Army (FAR) and interahamwe militia among the refugees pose a military threat, while the refugees themselves distract attention from impoverished

and displaced Zaireans.

More than a million Hutus fled camps on the Rwandan and Burundian border last October and November at the start of a campaign by rebels fighting the Zairean army.

About 600,000 returned to Rwanda in November via Goma, but hundreds of thousands more fled west into the jungle, including former Rwandan army troops and Interahamwe held responsible for massacres during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Since then the refugees — now begging to return home — have set up a series of makeshift camps and fled before the rebel advance in a trek that has hampered relief efforts.

UNHCR said it was appealing to donors for money to fly the most vulnerable refugees direct to the Rwandan capital Kigali from Kisangani at a rate of up to 2,000 per day. The rest, once they were strong enough, could then return to Rwanda overland by truck, barge and on foot.



A young girl attends an Easter mass at one of Kinshasa's Catholic churches on Sunday. The political situation remains uncertain despite a ceasefire agreement between rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila and President Mobutu Sese Seko reached in Lome, Togo. The negotiations are to take place next week (Reuters photo)

Albanian embassy says 79 missing after sea collision

ROME (AFP) — Seventy-nine people, mostly women and children, are listed missing from the Albanian boat which sank after colliding with an Italian warship on Friday, according to Albanian embassy documents disclosed Sunday.

Bad weather in the Adriatic Sea where the collision occurred 35 nautical miles off the Italian coast was still severely hampering search and rescue operations Sunday.

The documents sent to Italian investigators by the Albanian embassy here, showed there were 117 Albanians aboard the Kater 1 Rades tug when it was struck by the Italian warship Sibilla.

The 34 survivors and the four bodies recovered figure on the passenger list.

Recreations surrounding the collision are threatening to cloud the decision to send an Italian-led military force to Albania to secure aid deliveries.

Survivors allege the Italian navy vessel deliberately rammed their boat.

"The Italians are criminals," one survivor said.

Another described tearfully how his wife and three-month-old baby had disappeared in the water after the collision.

Italy's Navy Chief of Staff, Admiral Angelo Mariani, said the collision happened when the Albanian tug suddenly turned across the war-

ship's bow after it had been ordered to stop.

He accused the tug's captain of behaving "unpredictably and irresponsibly."

The warship, which Mariani said did not have any "obvious dents" on its bow, had been impounded.

Judicial sources in Italy said the Albanian boat's captain, Xhafer Namik, had been arrested. Deputy State Prosecutor Leonardo Leone de Castria said he had been accused of aiding "illegal immigration for financial gain."

Italian authorities say the tug had been stolen by a criminal gang involved in illegal immigration.

Witnesses in Vlore said the refugees paid \$600 each to the Mafia to embark, and that 120 people boarded.

The witnesses, cited by the Italian news agency ANSA, said that many women and children were in the hold when the tug capsized in minutes. Of the 34 survivors, 30 were men.

Despite the Albanian embassy's figures, Mariani insisted the tug's 20-metre length and three-metre width could not have held any more than 50 people.

On Monday Albanian President Sali Berisha agreed to reactivate a 1991 accord with Italy which allows the Italian navy to patrol Albanian waters to stop refugee boats heading for Italy.

Italy has already accepted 13,000 Albanians in the last four weeks.

Kenyan troops move to Ethiopia border

NAIROBI (R) — Kenyan troops and paramilitary police equipped with helicopters have moved to the border with Ethiopia after Ethiopian bandits killed 80 Kenyans, including 19 policemen, in a cattle raid last week, area residents said Sunday.

Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, in a statement issued in Nairobi, paid tribute to the dead policemen who, he said, had lost their lives in the service of their country. He said Kenya would formally protest to Ethiopia about the raid.

Kenyan security sources said a major military and police operation had been launched in Marsabit district after the raid.

Last weekend about 300 armed Shangilla and

Arnakolle tribesmen from southern Ethiopia crossed into Kenya and raided a nomadic settlement at Kopkai. They killed 36 Kenyans and stole 4,000 cattle, goats and camels.

More casualties resulted from later clashes between the raiders and local tribes and police.

Military sources said the raiders had fled across the border into Ethiopia, pursued by Kenyan security forces.

Cattle raiding is common in the area, but last week's attack was one of the most serious ever recorded. Officials said some of the policemen who died were surrounded and overpowered by the raiders in a swampy area alongside Lake Turkana.

Japanese minister seeks better ties in China talks

BEIJING (R) — Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda and top Chinese leaders Sunday agreed to follow Tokyo's symbolic resumption of grant aid to Beijing with efforts to further mend the battered Sino-Japanese relationship.

Japanese officials said both sides agreed in principle to an exchange of visits this year by Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and Chinese Premier Li Peng, with Chinese President Jiang Zemin expected to travel to Tokyo in 1998.

Mr. Ikeda met Mr. Jiang and Mr. Li Sunday, one day after signing an agreement that lifted a ban on grant aid imposed by Tokyo in protest at Chinese nuclear weapons testing.

Both Mr. Ikeda and Mr. Jiang had signalled their willingness to work hard for better relations during 1997, the 25th anniversary year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Beijing, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Hidehiko Hamada.

Expressed his wish to further improve bilateral relations between Japan and China in this commemorative year," Mr. Hamada told a news briefing.

Japanese officials say ties with Beijing have warmed greatly since being chilled last year by disputes over a contested island group in the East China Sea and by Mr. Hashimoto's visit to a controversial Tokyo war shrine.

The disputes, along with friction over Chinese nuclear weapons testing, a Japan-U.S. security pact and the legacy of Tokyo's imperial past, had helped drive relations to what Japanese officials called their lowest ebb since 1972.

Mr. Ikeda had told Mr. Li it was normal for any 25-year marriage to experience problems, and that such disputes were the inevitable result of the intimacy of matrimony, Mr. Hamada said.

"Once (we) got married, suddenly we have to live together... Of course, (we) may find some problems... because the basic relations are much closer," he said.

Le Pen wants Euro nationalist link-up

STRASBOURG, France (R) — Shrugging off a mass protest against the rise of his far-right party, French National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen urged Europe's nationalists on Sunday to strengthen their hand through cooperation.

"We propose in coming days a form of...political cooperation between our countries. Why not call this 'Euro-nat' — a grouping of the Europe of nationalists, of the Europe of nationalists," Le Pen told a party congress in the eastern French city of Strasbourg.

Le Pen made the proposal after speeches to the congress by several rightists from other European countries, including Ricardo Saez de Ynestillas, president of Spain's Alianza Unidad Nacional, Frank Vanhecke, president of Belgium's Vlaams Blok, and former German European Parliament Deputy Hans-Gunter Schoddrich.

"Mr Le Pen is in the vanguard of the Nationalist Movement," Saez de Ynestillas told cheering delegates on the second day of the front's congress.

A day earlier, an estimated 40,000 anti-front protesters marched through the streets of Strasbourg, which is home to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, set up to promote human rights and democracy across



Jean-Marie Le Pen

the continent.

The congress was convened to elect party leaders and plot strategy for gaining a foothold in the French parliament in March 1998 general elections. The front now has no seats in parliament despite Le Pen's 15 per cent showing in the 1995 presidential election. Le Pen told the party faithful that some 180,000 Strasbourg voters had voted for him in 1995 presidential elections, and he accused the marchers on Saturday of launching "an organised attack on democracy and on the republic."

March organisers boasted that the protest, which went off peacefully and was believed to be the largest ever assembled against Le Pen, marked a turning point in their campaign to curb the front's influence in French

politics.

But its impact was marred by evening clashes between police and young people after the march had ended.

Three police were slightly hurt as they fought stonethrowers trying to reach the Strasbourg conference centre, where the 2,200 front delegates met under extremely tight security.

Police later clashed with demonstrators at a rock concert in the city centre, firing tear gas at hundreds of young people after some of them set fire to a car and threw bottles at them.

Officials said 21 shop windows were shattered throughout the city during the night and 38 people were taken into custody, including five or six Germans and a Dutchman. Most remained behind bars on Sunday.

"This heinous agitation was like an homage to virtue by vice," Le Pen told delegates in the second of three major speeches he was scheduled to deliver during the congress.

He proposed sending the bill for the damage to "Cathy the Red" — a reference to Strasbourg's socialist mayor Catherine Trautmann, who led the march while appealing for calm. Delegates re-elected Le Pen party president by acclamation. The 68-year-old leader was unopposed and has refused to publicly discuss the question of a successor.

Britain's Conservatives battle sleaze allegations

LONDON (R) — Britain's Conservatives faced an uphill struggle Sunday to wrench the focus of the election battle away from sleaze allegations onto policy differences with their resurgent Labour opponents.

With newspapers predicting a Labour landslide on May 1 if the headlines remain dominated by claims of sexual indiscretions and financial irregularities, legislators at the centre of the scandals refused to step down as candidates.

Sir Michael Hirst, chairman of the Scottish Conservatives, resigned Saturday over claims he had had a homosexual lover. But Neil Hamilton, a former minister at the centre of allegations that Harrods store owner Mohammed Al-Fayed paid several MPs generously to ask parliamentary questions, refused to quit as candidate for his safe northern England seat.

Instead he handed a pro-Conservative newspaper, the Sunday Telegraph, the text of

part of the proceedings of an internal parliamentary inquiry into the allegations against him in which Mr. Fayed gave evidence in the hope it would clear his name.

Piers Merchant, whose photograph kissing a 17-year-old nightclub hostess in a park appeared in a tabloid newspaper last week, Saturday won the backing of his local party as their standard-bearer in the London commuter town of Beckenham.

Prime Minister John Major hinted he would like to see merchant and Mr. Hamilton sacrifice themselves for the wider interests of their party in a letter he sent to Hirst.

However, the Sunday Mirror said Mr. Hirst quit only after seven hours of pressure by two senior colleagues in the Scottish party who told him, incorrectly, that the newspaper had a dossier about a past indiscretion in his private life.

Mr. Major announced the election date on March 15,

giving an unusually long 6-1/2 weeks notice of polling day, in the hope that the long campaign would enable his party to make inroads into Labour's opinion poll lead of over 20 points.

But the first two weeks have seen a series of publicity disasters for his party, which has held power since 1979.

As well as Hirst, one of their Scottish MPs has stepped down as a candidate amid rumours about his private life while former Minister Tim Smith, implicated in the "cash for questions" affair, was disowned by his local party.

"The Tories face not simply being buried under a tide of sleaze, but under a Labour landslide," the Sunday Times commented. "To have any chance of avoiding that fate, they must about the careers of the two mps (Hamilton and merchant)."

Bookmakers William Hill offered odds of 11-to-one that Mr. Major would be re-elected.

Russia-NATO accord could be signed in Paris in May

MOSCOW (AFP) — An agreement between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) could be signed in May in Paris, an informed Kremlin source told ITAR-TASS news agency Sunday.

President Boris Yeltsin, who agreed on the principle of a Russia-NATO accord at their recent summit in Helsinki, would fly to Paris for the signing, ITAR-TASS said.

A Kremlin press spokesman would neither confirm nor deny the report.

The object of the yet-to-be finalised accord is to overcome Moscow's fears that its security would be threatened by the entry of former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO.

The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are expected to be the first states to join the alliance when it holds its Madrid summit in

July.

A Western diplomat in Moscow who asked not to be named told AFP that the idea of signing the NATO-Russia accord in Paris could be seen as a way of "compensation" for Washington's rejection of the French-backed idea of holding a summit between Britain, France, Germany, the United States and Russia.

U.S. President Bill Clinton will be in Europe on May 27-28 for the 50th anniversary of the Marshall plan and a U.S.-European Union summit.

On Saturday, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel expressed hope for an agreement, saying it was "desirable" that there be agreement before the Madrid NATO summit in July, and that the document could perhaps be finalised by the foreign ministers' meeting in Sintra, Portugal, May 27-29.

However his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Primakov

stressed that the document on which they were working was at present "far from ready."

Mr. Primakov confirmed that, along with the Western allies, Moscow was hoping for an agreement by the special NATO summit in Madrid July 8-9, at which the alliance is expected to formally launch the process of eastward expansion.

But the Russian foreign minister remarked that "for a document to be signed it has to be ready" and hinted that the Western allies had to move further to accommodate Russia, saying that "not everything depends on one side."

Mr. Primakov said he was to meet NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana for further talks on the document in Moscow in mid-April. He would also be having talks with French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette on the matter, he said.

Heaven's Gate cultists tried to make science-fiction movie

RANCHO SANTA FE, California (R) — As family members prepared to bury the 39 Heaven's Gate cultists after their mass suicide, it emerged Saturday that the group had been trying to make a science-fiction movie about its bizarre beliefs.

Autopsies were still being carried out Saturday on the last of the victims, and San Diego police were surprised when a Canadian man arrived to claim the body of his 40-year-old daughter.

Officials earlier had said they did not expect any families to come to San Diego and that arrangements were being made to ship the 39 bodies to the states where their relatives lived. Most bodies were expected to be shipped out of San Diego Monday,

The father of Erika Ernst arrived at the San Diego morgue Saturday morning with his wife and sister to claim her body. They left two hours later in a motorhome with a police escort.

San Diego County Sheriff's Dept. Sgt. Dan Wall said the family's arrival was "totally unexpected." He said the Ernsts were the only family to come to San Diego and did not expect any others.

In another California twist to the tragedy, it emerged that the Heaven's Gate group had hoped to add television production to its successful business designing computer web pages for the Internet.

Rick Singer, a Los Angeles television and movie producer, told how he had been working with

cult members to try to get a movie made based on their beliefs about life on earth and moving on to the "Kingdom of God."

"I was shocked," he said on Saturday about their suicide pact. "They were a little weird the way they looked and dressed, but they were so eager and so enthusiastic."

Entitled "Beyond human: Return of the next level," Singer said the cult's screenplay featured motherships, alien abductions and clashes between bad reptile-like aliens and benevolent ones for control of the earth. It told of the ability to "rise up" to a level several flights above humans.

The group began their movie project in 1995 while living in Phoenix, Arizona, and had their last contact with Singer just two

weeks before their charismatic leader, Marshall Applewhite, led them in the final death ritual.

Police probing the mass suicide focused on finding out how the group managed to acquire massive amounts of the drug phenobarbital which they used to kill themselves.

San Diego County medical examiner Dr. Brian Blackbourne said a lethal dose of the prescription sleeping pill amounted to 50 tablets for each person. To ensure death the cult members also put plastic bags over their heads secured by elastic bands.

Police said that while they did not expect any criminal charges to result from the mass suicide they were anxious to know how the cult got its hands on so much pheno-

barbital.

All 39 members of the cult killed themselves over a period of days. According to their videotaped suicide notes, the cultists believed that a spaceship hiding behind the Hale-Bopp comet nearing earth would take them to heaven.

Their bodies were discovered on Wednesday in the \$1.6 million mansion the cult rented in the exclusive San Diego suburb of Rancho Santa Fe.

By Friday night, autopsies had been performed on 30 of the victims and on Saturday morning the medical examiner's office began autopsies on four more. Thirty-five of the victims' families have been notified.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975
مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية - مؤسسة صحفية مستقلة - مؤسسة صحفية مستقلة - مؤسسة صحفية مستقلة

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:
MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephone: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Viable policy for Iraq

U.S. SECRETARY of State Madeleine Albright's remarks late last week that Washington would consider opening a dialogue with Baghdad only after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is replaced naturally drew criticism from many quarters. Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali's reaction to Albright's statement that no country, big or small, should interfere in the internal affairs of another state no doubt reflect the views of many nations as well.

Despite the knowledge that the new secretary of state left the door open for different interpretations of what she meant in certain aspects of her speech, the fact remains that what she actually said is contentious at best. It is virtually unprecedented that a country would serve notice on another that the latter may not expect normal relations with it unless it literally overthrows its own regime by whatever means. Had Albright called for the introduction of democracy and respect of human rights to Iraq as a pre-condition for establishing contacts with Baghdad, the call might have been seen as fair and appropriate. But to go to the limit and urge a revolution or a coup d'etat in a country is obviously against international norms and diplomatic standards.

As Dr. Majali said, it is up to the Iraqi people to elect their leadership and chart their destiny free from any intimidation or manipulation. Now it seems that Washington is poised to not only maintain a stance of hostility towards Baghdad but also threaten not to renew the U.N. oil-for-food accord. No wonder the implementation of the \$2 billion deal for the first six months has not been conducted smoothly or expeditiously. Iraq accuses the U.S. of having tried every trick to impede the deal even after consenting to it formally.

In any case, after six years of trials and tribulations, Iraq is still subjected to the crippling U.N. sanctions.

But the kind of posturing that the U.S. applies to this Arab country seems to be strengthening the ruling regime rather than weakening it. It might well be argued that only when the Iraqi people can enjoy normal living again will they be expected to turn their attention to political concerns including the choice of leadership. That is why perhaps the U.S. should think twice about keeping the same policy towards Iraq, especially since this new-old policy that was enunciated by Albright, has not been working. And then the question should be raised as to whether the secretary of state might want to see someone like Saddam Hussein take over from him, should it be just the person of the leader that she just does not wish to see. The U.S. has to have a viable policy towards Iraq. Otherwise the map of the region itself could become the subject of change and instability.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily said Sunday that there is no point in the U.S. envoy, Dennis Ross' visit to the region if he does not stop the Israelis from pursuing their violations of the peace accords and does not put an end to the construction of settlements on Arab lands. All that Mr. Ross has been doing during his visits so far was to ask the Palestinians to exercise self-restraint and refrain from resisting Israel's violations of the peace accords, said Salah Jarrah. The writer said when the Israelis started opening the tunnel under Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the U.S. stood by doing nothing and when the Israelis started work on the construction of a settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim, Washington remained passive, noted the writer. But, he said, only when the intifada was resumed, after the opening of the tunnel, was Mr. Ross sent to the region to ask the Palestinians to avoid violence with the Jewish state and he did the same thing when the new intifada started after the work had begun on Jabal Abu Ghneim. The writer also noted that Washington took one more step in displaying its total bias towards Israel when it sent an envoy to Rabat, during a meeting of the Jerusalem Committee, to persuade them to avoid condemning Israel in the committee's final communiqué. He said Washington has proved that its sole concern is to protect Israel's interests and help it execute the Zionist dream in the Arab region.

A WRITER for Al Dustour urged the Amman Municipality to deal with the congestion and the confusion in the marketplace, downtown Amman, and the difficulty of movement there due to the omnipresence of a large number of carts used by street vendors selling different agricultural products. Mohammad Daoud said that the trolleys pushed around by vendors are making it difficult for pedestrians and shoppers to move about and the air is filled with shouting and yelling of store merchants trying to move the vendors away from the entrances of their shops and of the vendors who would not budge. The writer noted that the municipality had tried several times to deal with this question, by removing the carts from the main streets and away from the shops, and had assigned a special area for them in a square nearby so that there will be no disputes among the merchants and no congestion in the streets, but it seems that this arrangement has collapsed and the street vendors have reappeared in strength, once again, at the same spots, creating new problems. The writer said that the present situation can by no means be tolerated any longer and a drastic solution has to be found for this chronic problem.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Public sector inefficiency must be weeded out

THE PUBLIC sector was recently under attack for its lack of efficiency and overweight, multi-layered bureaucracy, the plight of the orphans being only one manifestation of the depth of the problem. The children's dilemma happened to be more pronounced because they are the defenceless have-nots of society. The apathy of the public sector and its lack of efficiency have been with us for three decades now. The price for correcting the problem may be quite high. Is Jordan willing to pay it?

The public sector grew in the 1970s and early eighties when half the government budget came from foreign aid. Then it was reasonable for the government to alleviate unemployment by hiring two people to do a one-person job because Jordan only paid the salary of one for the two. In spite of the fallacy of this mode of thought, it was used as an excuse to continuously expand the scope and size of government.

As oil revenues fell with the drop in oil prices and the collapse of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), so did the remittances from the Gulf. The Jordanian public sector had to look internally for domestic sources of revenue. Civil servants' salaries became 80 per cent sponsored by domestic government revenues generated from taxes and customs.

Short-term commercial debt was also used to finance the growing public sector, only to be paid later from higher taxes and customs. The domestic versus total, which included a foreign subsidy, cost argument was no longer a valid — if it ever was — justification for the continued inefficiency of the public sector.

To escalate the urgency of the problem, the Gulf countries, which usually attracted the brightest in all fields, were repatriating Jordanians because of decreased oil revenues. Thus, the supply of the domestic labour force started to expand at a higher rate than that of the seventies. The government, then the largest employer (and still is, it pays the salaries of 45 per cent of the labour force) began receiving applications from those highly qualified returnees who were willing to accept any employment, government or otherwise. Thus, the public sector became at once the possessor of a surplus labour pool and the focal demand point of an additional labour pool of repatriates.

The large size of government has led to what is known in economics as "rent-seeking behaviour", where an individual uses government contacts to extract an undeserved benefit, such as a bribe, government contract or employment for an unqualified or undeserving action or agent. The main reason for this type of behaviour in Jordan, which can be viewed as a hedonistic society — a seeker of short-term benefits, is that people view the government as a "commons domain": the more one takes freely from it the more the person's private benefit becomes, with no regard for the social costs. Why do people ignore the social cost? When the cost is divided among the citizens of a country, a person's share is minimal, compared to the private benefit received from the act. And until Jordan is able to deal with private and social costs through effective and rational legislation, corruption and inefficiency will be the norm.

The following is an action plan for curing inefficiency

in the public sector. First, civil servants' salaries must increase in order for the government to attract the best and retain them. In other words, the government will be able to compete with the private sector for top talent.

But how will the government be able to pay these salaries? From the revenue it generates from privatisation, a valuable tool for shrinking government. Furthermore, those who stay with the government must be willing to retain or even train and accept tests that measure their skills. A state of the art knowledge and skill is what will carry the day for Jordan, and nothing else.

Second, Jordan needs anti-nepotism legislation, whereby government officials cannot hire their relatives. Jordan is not a feudalistic system and need not become one simply because of the large government size. The fact that a person's ancestry is nobler or better known than another's should only figure important in a shepherd culture, not in an industrial economy. Those who cannot compete use non-market standards to gauge others' behaviour and pass judgements on them. Useless rules such as: "My ancestors have built this country while yours were somewhere else" will not build Jordan but retard it for generations to come. People who produce effectively and efficiently increase the size of the pie for everyone: they are the true and best Jordanians.

Third, the competition law must soon become a reality because it creates a move away from protectionism as a means for economic sustainability. This law is imperative for ensuring that government monopolies do not become private monopolies. Eradicating monopolies in all sectors will improve the efficiency of the overall economy, including the private sector. After all, according to recent research, there is no significant difference in Jordan between the efficiency of the private and public sectors.

Fourth, the majority of government employment must become governed by short-term contracts (under two years). Job security beyond the norms of developed countries creates idleness. Officials must have the power to fire the inept employee and hire the qualified. This step will help eradicate the power of connection (wasta), hiring through contacts. The usual Jordanian employment practice is to hire a person through the wasta system and once the person is hired, no one can fire him. Wasta must become illegal. Expedient hiring and firing improves efficiency in both the private and public sectors. For example, one reason that government ministers are probably the hardest working and most efficient employees in the public sector is because of their contracts which, in addition to providing them with relatively high remuneration, also allow for the immediate termination of their employment. Reward and punishment must be swift: this is the basis for a more efficient government.

Having said all the above, one must remember that administrative changes, though vital and necessary, are a long-term policy goals, not immediate results. All improvement must be gradual and towards a goal. And please, let there be no sudden changes. Foreign investment, which is badly needed in Jordan, needs a stable socio-economic and political environment and not upheavals.

Elections in Yemen — test for democracy

SANAA — Against the Arab World's bleak democratic background, Yemen shines brightly. It held a multi-party, universal-suffrage, even reasonably fair, election in 1993, three years after North and South Yemen joined together. It is to hold another this April, less than three years after the north defeated the south's military bid to break away from the union. Yemen's Arabian neighbours do not much care for such goings-on. Many of Yemen's 16 million people fear the voting will not be democratic enough.

Their suspicion is that the election will be stage-managed by President Ali Abdullah Saleh's party, the General People's Congress (GPC), so far ahead that Yemen becomes, in effect, a one-party state. In 1993, the GPC won 123 of the seats in the 301-member parliament. Its junior partner, Islah (an Islamist party with 62 seats), is now its main election rival. The opposition, including the southern Yemen Socialist Party, is probably too fractured to present much competition.

Abdul Aziz Saqqaf, editor of the English-language Yemen Times, has set up a committee, based in Sanaa, to monitor the campaign. He got a grant to do so from the European Union, which is helping, financially and technically, with the election and will be observing the vote. Mr. Saqqaf has been in and out of prison for his critical editorials. He has also been beaten up by the police, but Yemen being a country of contradictions, is still allowed to produce his paper, writing more or less what he likes. He leaves the running of the committee to a lawyer, Shada Mohammad. She herself is unusual: 32 and unmarried in a country where girls are routinely married off in their teens and 70 per cent of women are illiterate (about twice the number of men).

The committee's volunteer workers, who scrutinise electoral lists, claim that many registered voters are under age, dead or never existed. The committee is soon to publish a

report that will claim no fewer than 176,000 inaccuracies (the courts have already ordered thousands of names to be dropped from lists in two governorates because they were registered illegally). There is also concern about the method of voting: under current arrangements, voters, illiterate or not, are supposed to write down the name of their chosen candidate. "Yemen is the first democratic experiment in the Gulf," says Miss Mohammad; "If we don't take care of it, we might well lose it."

Yemeni women, in particular, see the election as a turning-point. Only two were elected in 1993, but it gave them a taste for power — though parliament's power, compared with the president's, weighs light in the balance. Women in southern Yemen, better educated than in the north (Miss Mohammad was born in Aden and got her degree in Prague), especially deplore the religious rules and tribal conventions that restrain their freedom. In theory, all the parties stress the importance of the female vote. Amat Alsoswa, who as assistant deputy information minister is Yemen's highest-ranking woman, is gently sceptical. Women are more organised this time, she says, and more of them will get into parliament — if the parties keep their word.

Pessimists fear that a less-than-fair election could lead to violence. This would not necessarily be between south and north, however resentful the south at northern dominance. A leading columnist, Abdul Jabur Saud, wrote recently in the Yemen Times that the two partners, the GPC and Islah, might "enter into a war to liquidate each other." An unhappy thought in a country where most males, from eight to 80, are armed and everything from kalashnikovs to rocket-launchers is available.

The Economist

Human Rights File

All children are and should be equal

By Waleed M. Sadi

WHETHER THE orphanage issue itself brought down the government of former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti or it was only a peripheral factor, the fact remains that the situation of the orphans in this country is still a predominant concern for most Jordanians.

Since orphans in Jordan are, for the most part, composed of so-called "illegitimate children," the national crusade to help them acquires that much more importance. It must be said at the outset that children born out of wedlock are no longer perceived as "illegitimate" by the majority of the nation. International human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reject the victimisation of such children by calling them "names," or denying them treatment equal to other children's.

After all, if anybody is illegitimate in this context, it is the biological parents and not the innocent children who had no say in the decision to bring them to the world. Children born out of wedlock constitute a most vulnerable group, in urgent need for love, affection and support.

Stigmatising this group of unfortunate children by classifying them as "illegitimate" calls, therefore, for a speedy reconsideration in light of the new international norms and the fact that helpless children could be deprived of rights and privileges on par with those exercised and enjoyed by other children.

As His Majesty King Hussein has helped open our hearts to the plight of children lacking parental control and the love, care and attention of the people who gave them life, would it be too much to ask for the completion of the mission that we have set out to accomplish: free orphans of their current ordeals by amending national laws on "illegitimate" children?

As we are in fact treaty obligated to remove all elements of discrimination against children born out of wedlock it is not high time that all legislation to the contrary be removed altogether?

Children, all children, should have a name, a nationality and enjoy the right to inherit. They are all entitled to have the support of the state when their biological parents cannot be identified and ensured education and opportunities to lead a completely normal life. When the parents of

children can be identified, and there are all sorts of scientific ways to do just that, then they must be held accountable, materially and emotionally, to ensure the welfare of their offsprings.

It so happens that children born out of wedlock are often referred to as "bastards" by the very people who are assigned the task of taking care of them in orphanages. We can all image the extent of the trauma these helpless children feel when they are called such names by their nurses. Instead of showing them affection and love, so many of the people ostensibly taking care of children born out of wedlock leave them deeply scarred for the whole life.

It should be made a serious felony to mistreat children, especially at an age when they are most prone to be negatively affected. The King's personal intervention on behalf of abandoned children will have been in vain if no follow up is maintained. The least we should be thinking of is the establishment of a society for the care and welfare of orphans. Such a society should be given a mandate to inspect at random all orphanages in the country.

And why not do what all other nations do to assist in the solution of the crisis of orphans — legitimise the process of adoption?

True, in Islam, adoption in the full sense of the word is not accepted. Yet, there is no legitimate reason why people, capable materially and emotionally, cannot take care of other children and give them a home and all the love and affection that they deserve. Many childless parents would love to "adopt" orphans to fill the vacuum in their lives if only our laws would make that feasible.

There must be a better way to deal with orphans than to keep them cooped up in institutions where their most basic emotional needs would not or cannot be satisfied. I, for one, would like to see a complete reconsideration of the adoption phenomenon in our midst so that children's rights are given top priority in the determination of the final decision on the subject.

Niveen Abboushi,
Lebanon.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

LETTERS

Peace is for equals and among equals

To the Editor:

"SMALL AS a mouse and yet its voice resounds all over the neighbourhood." This is a common saying in Arabic, and the best description of Israel's stance in the region.

Many of us wonder how a country the size of the state of New Jersey threatens an Arab World that is larger than the United States, in both size and population. What is more bewildering is the fact that such a rodent has the power to turn conventional wisdom and sobriety into total irrationality.

Before delving into the specifics of the overrated peace, it is imperative that we ask ourselves some questions: How do we introduce Israel to our children? How can we — the last link in an Arab-nationalist chain — dismiss an entire history of rightful struggle? How are we expected to remodel our psyche in a matter of a few short years?

Perhaps the profession of diplomacy dictates that its adherents succumb to the unacceptable. Political wisdom may allow to reach the impossible, but the average

sane person should be excused from accepting this notion. In short, signatures on paper cannot erase a collective psychology of hatred and disdain.

To set the record right, Israel is not our friend. Israel is not our partner in peace either. Peace should be based on equality, sovereignty and respect. Subservience is not part of the equation. There are more than 4 million Palestinians scattered around the world. More than half a million of these are refugees living in Lebanon. Apart from dominating over two-thirds of the land in occupied territories, Israel continues to confiscate Arab land and to expand settlements. The danger of this lies in the rigid Israeli ideology that all the "rightful land of Israel" should be held only by Jews. Needless to say, the issue of Jerusalem is not a debatable one since it is the Jewish, "God-granted," eternal capital — regardless of how many international resolutions this violates. Of course, with no official Arab plan or consensus for Jerusalem, I do not believe we can claim our legitimate right over the contenders.

The truth of the matter is simple. Under the banner of "peace," Israel is infiltrating the roots of power in the

Arab World in an attempt to weaken and divide it. Little is known about the simmering social and moral discontent that is bound to boil. Terrorism is merely a reaction to terrorism.

Lasting peace should be our ultimate dream. But the peace we ought to seek should be a dignified and equitable; peace on our terms and nobody else's. Until then, many of us will continue to fight Israel, at least intellectually, morally and...

Har Homa — only one of six new settlement plans and reason for enhanced violence

AS WORLD attention focuses on the tragic events unfolding in this area, it becomes even more important to understand the context in which the current situation has developed.

Continuing settlement expansion, house demolition, closure, torture, continued administrative detention — these Israeli occupation policies have resulted in a growing desperation and isolation of the Palestinian people.

On March 18, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu executed the fateful decision to begin construction on Abu Ghneim Mountain of the new Jewish settlement of "Har Homa" or Mount Wall.

As bulldozers dug into the land on the mountain, reaction was at first muted as the Palestinian Authority attempted to keep protests peaceful.

The bulldozers continued their work despite repeated warnings from the Israeli

military establishment that Palestinian reaction could not be predicted.

On March 19, violent protests erupted in the Bethlehem area in response to the construction, resulting in tens wounded and highlighting the increasingly tense atmosphere in the region.

On March 20, protests and confrontations occurred in the Hebron area, in response to the increasingly hostile policies of the Netanyahu administration.

But Har Homa is not the only new Jewish settlement planned by this government and threatening the territorial and demographic integrity of East Jerusalem.

In fact, construction activity in the illegal Jewish settlements of Jerusalem and the West Bank continues at an accelerated pace.

The current Israeli government feels no compulsion to protect any "status quo" of the occupied territories, as stipulated in the

Oslo agreements, and in fact makes it a point to openly violate this understanding.

New Settlements in Jerusalem:

1. Ras al Amoud — a new settlement has been planned in the heart of this Jerusalem Arab neighbourhood — 132 new units, surrounded by a fence and financed by an American millionaire.

2. The "E-1" plan, to construct a new settlement between the huge Ma'aleh Adumim settlement and Jerusalem, requiring the confiscation of hundreds of dunums of Palestinian land; 1,500 units and a 3,000-room hotel will be constructed to connect this settlement to Jerusalem proper.

3. The Eastern Gate project, a plan to confiscate 700 dunums and construct 2,000 units for Jewish residents only, to connect the settlements of French Hill and Pisgat Ze'ev in occupied East Jerusalem.

According to the Israeli

press, this plan will help prevent Arab construction in this area.

The Israeli government has announced plans to construct some 200 housing units in the Arab East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Abu Dis, to establish a Jewish presence in this neighbourhood since the future capital of the Palestinian autonomy will most likely be established here.

5. Har Homa B, a plan that originated as a settlement project for Jews only adjacent to Har Homa "A", the new settlement now under construction.

Given world-wide condemnation of the Har Homa A project, Har Homa B may be constructed for Arab residents.

6. Silwan: On March 20, five more families moved into this Arab neighbourhood, which borders on Jerusalem's Old City.

Currently there are a total of 17 Jewish families and 30 Yeshiva students illegally occupying houses in this neighbourhood, for a total

of over 100 illegal Jewish settlers in this tense and volatile area.

The Israeli government in February approved plans to extend three major roads in Eastern Jerusalem, to separate the Arab villages of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and to connect the Jewish settlements of Givat Ze'ev, Neve Yacov and Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem.

These roads, planned over the protests of the United States for violating the understandings of the Oslo accords, will be constructed so that these settlements will "not feel cut off from Jerusalem, due to the potential continuity of Ramallah with the (Arab) villages of Hizma, Anata and Zaim (to the north east of Jerusalem) (Jerusalem Post, Feb. 19, 1997)."

Construction has already begun in two new settlements in the West Bank:

1. Kfar Oranim settlement, built several months ago in the north of the West Bank.

Some 50 units have already been completed, according to a report by Peace Now.

2. Religious students from a military preparatory college in the settlement of Eli took over a hilltop in the south of the West Bank in February, with the intention of establishing a new settlement. According to the Israeli Defence Ministry, the "nationalistic" plan is to "encourage youth to take part in national and security missions and to strengthen their value of settlement."

In addition, in January, the Israeli government offered for sale some 1,500 of 3,000 housing units in the West Bank, whose sale had been frozen by the previous Labour administration as part of the Israeli obligations under the Oslo accords.

The government also announced preferred development status for the settlements of the West Bank, offering generous mortgage options and up to 50

per cent discounts on development charges.

Also in January, the Israeli government announced the planned construction of 4,553 new housing units in the West Bank in six different West Bank settlements.

These announcements of unilateral construction and the creation of new settlements on Arab lands in the occupied Palestinian territories reflect a radical rejection of the understandings come to in the Oslo agreements.

Continuing Israeli policies in these areas have served to lay the foundations for heightening tension and a growing despair that a just peace can ever be achieved. Palestinian frustration and international condemnation have not slowed settlement expansion or house demolition, but rather these policies and the growing dispossession and hopelessness of the Palestinian people help explain the violence which has scarred

this region yet again.

The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (LAW) condemns the violence committed against the Palestinian people in the form of land confiscation, settlement expansion, the construction of new settlements, house demolition, closure, torture and administrative detention, and all acts of violence.

LAW demands that the Israeli government halt all illegal and provocative acts in the occupied territories, and calls on the international community and all concerned parties to demand that the United States reexamine its foreign aid policy to the Israeli government, without which continuing Israeli occupation and settlement construction would not be possible.

The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment

Stone comes to life in village quest for water

According to Greek mythology, the Gorgon's glare could turn living things to stone. In northern Cameroon, people are putting this practice into reverse. They have turned boulders into a source of life in their fight against drought and disease

By Tony Seskus

MOKOLO, Cameroon — Few things look as lifeless as the big grey boulders of Cameroon's northern savannah. They litter the rolling hills and shimmer in the midday sun — hot stone symbolising the harsh conditions of the long dry season in this semi-desert.

The village of Gougoulung in Far North province is built among these rocks. From November to May, life can be a struggle for its 1,300 inhabitants. Plants become crisp brown shells. Rivers disappear.

In this inhospitable climate, the resourceful north-easterners have found ways to tap life from the barren boulders. An ingenious new project has transformed one of the area's largest stones into a clean-water supply system that can quench the village's thirst for arid months on end, while fending off the constant threat of disease.

"We're very happy," says 17-year-old Domayo Amos with a smile. "Water is life. Now we have lots of it."

The structure is simple but effective. A wall, 45

centimetres high, was built around the circumference of a large sloping boulder. The wall guides water down the rock's 500 square metre surface, through a filter of gravel and into a 235,000-litre reservoir. The water is then filtered again through a system of sand and gravel before running into sanitary tanks.

Before the system was built, villagers had to gather most of their water in buckets and store it for the dry season. The rocky ground made digging a well virtually impossible. When the water was gone, the women hiked more than 10 kilometres in 40 degrees centigrade to visit the nearest well.

"Now they don't have to walk far water at all — and the children can help carry water, too," says Amos.

The new system is much cleaner than a well, which can often be a source of contamination when many people are dipping their buckets into the water. Cholera kills dozens of people in the area every year.

But the boulder system helps prevent the spread of

bacteria. In addition to the filtering system, it is equipped with taps so that people do not have to dip in their buckets. Since the system's completion, no one has suffered a water-borne disease.

The development was the inspiration of Bin Rabin, son of a farmer from North West province, who is a water-project manager with the international health and education aid agency, CARE. The organisation paid most of the 10 million CFA francs it cost to build the system. Villagers contributed 150,000 CFA francs.

"I had spent weeks trying to figure out if we could drill sideways into a hill for water and decided it was simply impossible," recalls 38-year-old Rabin. "I was very disappointed. I crawled up onto those rocks to think by myself for a while and that's when I spotted the boulder."

"I thought, 'why can't we use that rock as a pan?' We could catch the water! It was a dream come true."

Rabin rushed back to his colleagues in Mokolo and told them his plan. Although other countries had used roofs or hand-made troughs to catch water, no-one knew of a major system using a rock, and the idea was greeted with healthy scepticism.

"They weren't quite as excited about it as I was. They told me it was a white elephant," Rabin says with

a chuckle. "But when I explained my plans to the villagers, they knew exactly what I was talking about — they'd been doing it for years."

The village had been using a rock wall to catch some of the 600 millimetres of rain that falls annually in the region, but this system held only enough water for a couple of weeks.

"I wasn't sure how everything would work out, but I knew we could improve on that," Rabin laughs.

He and two other technicians oversaw the project and guided the construction. The villagers did the rest.

Two masons and 62 labourers built the trough, the reservoir, the filter system and the tank.

The system worked well during its first dry season, and is just beginning its second test. Rabin's colleagues and engineers from several countries have been impressed by the success. Two similar projects are now planned for the area and there are moves to copy the design abroad.

"Professionally, it's very satisfying," says Rabin. "When I was growing up, I always dreamed of inventing something, so this is great for me. But what's more satisfying is knowing we've improved the quantity and quality of water in the village — knowing it may save lives."

Gemini News Service

Regent urges press to be accurate

(Continued from page 1)

trade and economic dealings between the two sides in a bid to liberate Palestinian economy from Israel's domination adding that seventy per cent of Palestine's economy is dependent on the Israeli economy, a situation that should be changed through openness in trade.

Regarding Israeli Jewish settlement programmes, the Regent said that Jordan totally rejects Jewish settlements in Arab lands as a violation of international law and an obstacle in the path of peace building, and that there is a difference between political settlement which has political objectives and housing which aims at meeting humanitarian needs.

The Prince also stressed the need for accurate information and facts which help in dealing with the

Israeli political settlement so that "we can point out that Israel has not sought to meet the housing needs of Palestinians as it has claimed it was building six hundred housing units for the Palestinians in Jerusalem when their actual needs rise to 35,000 housing units."

Stressing the need for ensuring "soft security" in its social, political and economic sense, Crown Prince Hassan said: "Security for us is security for Arab citizens and their political, economic and humanitarian rights on their land."

He also stressed the need for international policies on this region in a manner that will direct these policies towards security in its comprehensive form away from the concepts of oil, military security and Israel.

The Regent stressed the need for interdependence

among Arab countries within the concept of economic integration whereby all Arabs can benefit from natural and human resources.

He also underlined the need for preserving national unity by civic education which deepens the concept of values and he stressed the need for quiet democratic dialogue to revive Arab tradition in the art of communication.

Calling on Jordanians to give due attention to the unemployment and poverty issues, Crown Prince Hassan said that there should be no discrimination in offering help to the needy citing His Majesty King Hussein's recent gesture to the orphans and stressing that the orphans were not affiliated to any particular group or sect in the Jordanian society.

Crown Prince Hassan called for the development and modernisation of Jordan's civic institutions as a basic requirement for building the democratic society that guarantees the rights of all citizens.

The Regent urged the attendees to seek accuracy and objectivity in dealing with events, and stressed that journalism should be based on accurate information and documented material.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawe told the journalists before the meeting that the government was committed to keeping channels of cooperation and communication open with the media.

Dr. Mutawe declared that the government will adopt a policy of openness and the development of responsible freedom in accordance with His Majesty the King's directives and within the framework of democracy and the rule of law.

Majority believes Majali will be successful

(Continued from page 1)

cent of the general public and 32.3 per cent of opinion leaders said "quite capable." 38.8 per cent and 43.5 per cent respectively said "fairly capable." 4.8 per cent and 11.5 per cent said "incapable," and 10.1 per cent and 3.2 per cent did not have any opinion.

As to the composition of the Council of Ministers,

37.2 per cent and 28.2 per cent gave it an "extremely good" rating, while 32.2 per cent and 42.9 per cent found it "fairly good." 3.9 per cent and 4.2 per cent found it poor and 3.8 per cent and 8.5 per cent felt it was "very poor." 22.9 per cent and 6.2 per cent had no opinion.

It was the third such poll conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies.

The centre said it interviewed 620 people for the latest poll: 76 businessmen, 100 university professors, 75 political party leaders, 80 professionals, 93 writers, journalists and artists, 72 union leaders and 45 senior state officials.

The survey was conducted between March 27 and 29. The centre said the findings had a margin of error of three per cent.

Thousands vent their anger on W. Bank streets

(Continued from page 1)

soon. "Without stopping the bulldozers and halting settlement activity, there will be no peace process," he said.

President Bill Clinton's Mideast envoy, Dennis Ross, made a two-day trip to the region last week in an effort to rescue the faltering peace process.

But following a meeting of the Palestinian cabinet and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Executive Committee in Gaza City on Saturday night, Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said: "Any initiative, including the American one, will not succeed unless it deals with the reasons for the eruption of violence, mainly the policy of confiscation of Palestinian land and the expansion of Jewish settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank."

"The Palestinian leadership feels it's not useful to hold any meeting between the Palestinian and Israeli representatives as long as the policy of expansion of settlements, confiscation of land and violating the agreement is continuing," he said.

In Arab East-Jerusalem and Arab towns in Israel, shops shut and rallies were held to mark Land Day, the anniversary of an expropriation of Arab-owned land in northern Israel in 1976. The expropriation set off large protests, in which six Israeli Arabs were killed by Israeli troops.

In Tel Aviv, two women were lightly injured when an Israeli Arab youth threw a rock at a passing bus.

The most serious clashes

on Sunday erupted near the West Bank town of Jenin. Hospital officials said 25 Palestinians were treated for rubber bullet wounds. Violence also flared in Hebron where eight Palestinians were wounded by rubber bullets.

In Ramallah Palestinian police used clubs to disperse hundreds of protesters heading towards an Israeli roadblock, witnesses said. Protesters erupted again and the army brought in a gravel cannon, which sprays pebbles.

In Gaza, hundreds of Palestinian youths tried to march on an Israeli checkpoint but were held back by Palestinian police.

Soldiers patrolled streets of Israeli cities, on alert for suicide bombers nine days after a militant killed himself and three Israeli women in an attack on a cafe in Tel Aviv.

Although they appeared to be under tight control Sunday, the protests, which broke out after Israel broke ground two weeks ago for a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, show no sign of subsiding.

Hundreds of mourners — including dozens of Palestinian police in khaki uniforms and red berets — marched in a funeral procession on Sunday for Salah, killed by Israeli gunfire on Saturday.

"No surrender," read one banner. Salah's body, held aloft by mourners, was wrapped in a Palestinian flag.

Salah was buried in his home village of Beit Sahour which is next to Jabal Abu Ghneim, known as Har Homa in Hebrew, the site

where Israel has started building the new settlement.

On Saturday evening, 1,000 Palestinians rallied outside Salah's home in Beit Sahour. "Your blood will not be wasted, and the answer will be in Tel Aviv," the crowd chanted in an apparent reference to the March 21 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

Palestinian doctors said Salah was shot in the chest with a live bullet when Israeli troops fired on stone throwers at a checkpoint at the southern entrance of Ramallah.

Israeli soldiers have mostly used tear-gas and rubber-coated steel bullets to quell demonstrations. More lethal live bullets are supposed to be used only in life-threatening situations.

The Israeli army spokesman's office said a preliminary investigation found that live ammunition had not been used at the checkpoint where Salah was killed, although it was used against protesters at the Kalandia refugee camp south of the checkpoint.

Jamal Abdullah Mahmoud, a protester from the camp, was critically injured with live bullets in the lung and chest, a doctor at Ramallah hospital said.

Members of the Fatah party marched Sunday in a show of unity with supporters of the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Hamas claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing.

In Hebron, protesters carried signs which read "no peace without the release of Palestinian prisoners," "no peace with settlements," and "Hebron is an Islamic city. The occupation must go."

League recommends freezing relations

(Continued from page 1)

make-up of Jerusalem before promised negotiations on the future of the city, which is holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews.

"This Israeli government ... has started now with the most dangerous attempt to challenge not only the Palestinians but the entire Arab and Islamic nation, by which I mean the Judaism-

tion of Holy Jerusalem," Mr. Arafat said.

"My brothers," he said, "the plan for Judaizing Jerusalem is going on with all impudence and arrogance."

He described Israel's actions as "a declaration of war ... against an unarmed people."

Mr. Arafat also criticised the United States for vetoing two resolutions in the

U.N. Security Council against Israel's plans for Jewish housing in East Jerusalem.

He said that former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker gave the Palestinians at the Madrid peace conference in 1991 a letter of guarantee saying Israel would not be allowed to change the demographics of Jerusalem during peace talks.

Saudis want Canada to extradite suspect

(Continued from page 1)

should be sent to Saudi Arabia since he is a Saudi and the bombing happened on Saudi territory.

The official told the Associated Press that Saudi Arabia had made a lot of progress in the investigation into the blast and needed to interrogate Sayegh to fit the pieces together.

He also said the United States was not the right place to try anyone implicated in the Dhahran blast. The official said the Canadians had expressed understanding for Saudi Arabia's request that Sayegh should be sent to Saudi territory.

Sayegh is to appear at an April 28 court hearing to determine whether or not he will be deported. He has requested refugee status in Canada, claiming he was persecuted in his homeland for religious reasons.

On Thursday, Canadian officials said they believe Sayegh, conducted surveillance at the military housing complex in Dhahran and drove the car that signalled the go-ahead to the driver of a fuel truck packed with 2 1/2 tonnes of explosives.

Sayegh denies any involvement in the bombing and says he was in Syria at the time. He says he is being targeted by the Saudi government because of his opposition to the ruling regime (See related story on page 12).

The Saudis reportedly have detained dozens of suspects in the Dhahran attack, including some with ties to Iran, but have not released any details of the inquiry. U.S. officials have been frustrated by lack of access to suspects.

Investigators have blamed the explosion on militants opposed to Western forces in the Saudi kingdom.

Arab Gulf states need \$40b for infrastructure

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states need to pump around \$40 billion into infrastructure projects over the next 10 years to face the needs of their growing populations, independent figures have showed.

The investments by the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which controls nearly 45 per cent of the world's oil, will cover communications, electricity and water, ports, roads and other sectors, according to organisers of an infrastructure conference in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The Middle East Economic Digest (MEED), which is cosponsoring the event with the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the funds were part of the Middle East's total infrastructure investments of \$200 billion.

"Securing such huge funds raises questions given the instability in the incomes of regional governments," it said in a statement.

Infrastructure needs in the GCC and other Arab states will be the main theme of the conference opening in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

Officials and experts from the Middle East, United States and Europe will participate.

Bankers said financing for infrastructure projects could be secured through the Gulf private sector which has in excess of \$300 billion in local and overseas assets.

They noted several regional states had embarked on privatisation of public enterprises as part of reforms aimed at reviving their economies and diversifying their sources of income away from volatile oil export revenues.

"No one knows what trend oil prices will take in the next 10 years. This makes it imperative for Gulf states to rely more on the private sector in financing domestic development," a UAE banker said.

Oman has already privatised part of its electricity sector and is planning to sell more government institutions to the public.

Kuwait and Bahrain have reported partial privatisations while Qatar and the UAE have similar plans.

Saudi Arabia, by far the biggest GCC member, has announced plans to sell part of its large communications and electricity sector as it expects its development needs to grow at a time when oil earnings could stabilise.

The projected expenditure on infrastructure over the next decade is a fraction

of the development spending by the six members during the oil boom.

Bankers estimated such expenditure exceeded \$500 billion between 1975 and 1985, when GCC countries were engaged in one of the biggest construction drives in modern history to turn their desert oases into modern cities.

Official figures showed that over the past 26 years, Saudi Arabia alone spent 4.2 trillion riyals (\$1.12 trillion) on development.

Abu Dhabi, the main UAE oil producer, pumped more than \$200 billion.

"Spending on infrastructure during the oil boom was no problem for the GCC countries as their coffers were flush and their other needs were not so large given their relatively small populations," a bank manager said.

Independent estimates showed the GCC's population is projected to grow from around 26 million in 1995 to 32.5 million in 2000 and 54.7 million in 2015.

Most member states have announced plans to expand their electricity networks and build more water desalination plants, and other development projects to cater for the needs of their increasing populations.

Kuwait's overseas assets on the rise

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait's current account surplus reached \$6.7 billion in 1996, while the value of the oil-rich state's overseas assets also rose, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said Saturday.

The current account surplus in 1996 was 2.028 billion dinars (\$6.7 billion) compared with 1.365 billion dinars (\$4.5 billion) in 1995, according to CBK figures quoted by the official Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

The report gave few details, but said the improvement was due to rising surpluses in the trade and services accounts, two of the main elements included in the current account.

The trade account is mainly made up of oil export earnings that were boosted by buoyant crude prices last year, while the services account is dominated by income from Kuwait's investments abroad which have benefited from booming international stockmarkets.

The report said the value of Kuwait's overseas investments — which forms part of the capital account — rose by 1.763 billion dinars (\$5.8 billion) in 1996.

The government does not release figures for the total value of its holdings abroad, but analysts say Kuwait's overseas assets tumbled after the 1991 Iraqi invasion to meet the costs of liberation and a post-war reconstruction programme.

From more than \$100 billion before the invasion, Kuwait's overseas holdings fell to an estimated \$35 billion but have now started to recover and stand at some \$40 billion, the analysts say.

The KUNA report said Kuwait's balance of payments, which includes the current and capital accounts, showed a surplus of 1.742 billion dinars (\$5.7 billion).

Oman to keep rial-dollar link

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Gulf state of Oman will keep its currency attached to the U.S. dollar on the grounds that it ensures stability for the domestic economy, its central bank chairman said in press remarks Sunday.

Hamud bin Senjur said there were no plans to link the rial to a basket of currencies.

"Oman has chosen to link its currency to the U.S. dollar at a fixed exchange rate because of some considerations of special concern to the country," Mr. Senjur told the United Arab Emirates (UAE) daily Al Khaleej.

"They include the fact that the dollar is the official price of oil and revenues from oil exports account for the bulk

of Oman's income. So, Oman believes that for the time being the dollar is the best peg for its currency and it achieves stability for the local economy and facilitates its internal financial accounts and dealings with other countries," he explained.

Oman is believed to be among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members opposing a detachment of their currencies from the U.S. dollar in a bid to link them to a basket of currencies and find a common peg.

Currency alignment in the GCC, a defence, political and economic alliance created in 1981, was stipulated by the group's 1983 economic pact which also calls for unifying customs tariffs and creating a

common market. Apart from the Omani rial, the currencies of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE are effectively pegged to the U.S. dollar while Kuwait's dinar is linked to a basket of major currencies, in which the dollar has nearly 40 per cent.

Gulf officials and businessmen have repeatedly called for delinking regional currencies from the dollar on the grounds that fluctuations in its rate were inflicting heavy losses on the GCC's economies and overseas investment.

"There is no doubt a single Gulf currency is a goal, which we are all seeking. But it is not as easy as some believe," Mr. Senjur said.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MARCH 31, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) This morning is not good today for communicating anything important, so keep quiet until a better opportunity. Attend strictly to business during the day and get good result from your career activities.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Don't let a private concern stop you from handling your regular daily duties. Be more sociable with your friends later this evening and make any effort to make guests in your home feel quite welcome.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You should not let an impulsive friend to get you in some form of difficulty. Make this evening a romantic one at home with your mate, so plan a romantic dinner and music which will set the mood.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Avoid an official today who can be quite demanding and could make your career activities difficult. Be more diplomatic, and don't try to push your personal desires on anyone, thereby avoiding any difficulties.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) This morning is not a good time today to begin any new projects, especially relating to business. Carry through with your true ambitions, which are to get involved in recreational activities with friends.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Study and handle a bill this morning, and be sure to avoid any difficulties concerning it. Be very cooperative with your mate later this evening and thereby you can maintain the harmony which you desire.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If an unpleasant outside matter pops up this morning, be sure to keep calm and make every effort to deal with the situation. Steer clear of a fellow associate who has drastic mood swings, which are always unexpected.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Steer clear of a fellow associate today who is irate and is making everyone in the office miserable. This person may not cool down until after lunch time, and then you may reach an agreement with career activities.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Forget an expensive pleasure this morning, and later today you can enjoy one which is less costly. Be helpful to your mate tonight and show him or her more affection which will be very much appreciated.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Try to calm down a disturbed family friend this morning, thus improving home conditions considerably. Get together with some old friends and pursue recreational activities which you will enjoy and have fun.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be particularly careful while driving on the highway today, especially in the morning. Plan your correspondence before writing later this evening, thereby you won't make any errors which could be detrimental.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Business associates can help you collect today the information you need to increase your efficiency in your career activities. Be accurate with your finances, thereby you won't find yourself short of funds when needed.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

South Korea's deficit swells to \$23.7b

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's current account deficit hit a record high of \$23.7 billion in 1996, up 165 per cent from \$8.95 billion a year ago, the Bank of Korea (BOK) has said.

The central bank attributed the largest-ever current account deficit to worsening terms of trade and a continued rise in imports of capital and consumption goods.

"The nation saw a drop of \$7.1 billion worth of exports in semiconductors, steel and petrochemicals in 1996," BOK Director Paeng Dong-Joon said.

The 1996 current account deficit was far higher than the initial gov-

ernment projection of \$6 billion, he said, predicting that the 1997 current account deficit would stand at \$18 billion.

The 1996 trade deficit swelled to \$15.3 billion from a deficit of \$4.75 billion a year earlier, Mr. Paeng said.

In 1996, the invisible trade deficit reached \$7.68 billion, compared with a \$3.6 billion deficit a year earlier, he said.

The tourism deficit accounted for 34 per cent of the total invisible trade gap, he said.

"Last year's current account deficit is projected to be equivalent to 4.7 per cent of gross national product forecast in 1996,"

Mr. Paeng said.

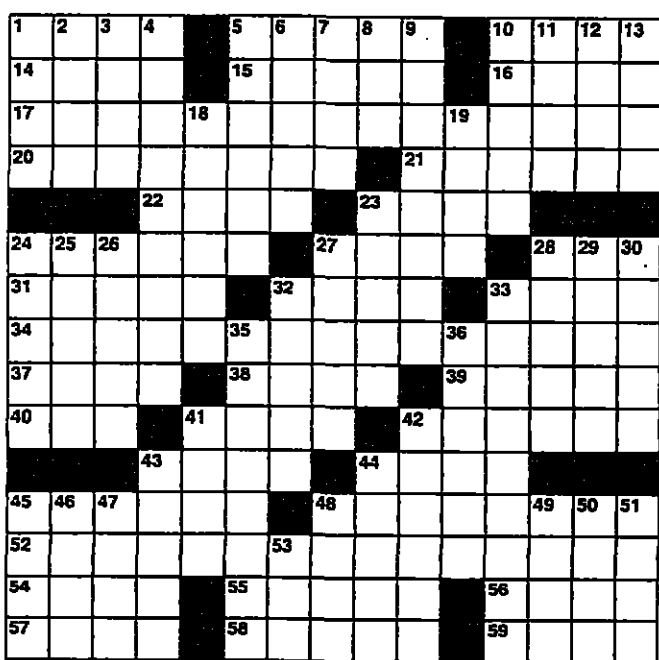
But he said the growing current account deficit to gross national product ratio, even if it topped five per cent, would not pose any grave threat to the nation's external payments and settlements capability.

In 1996, customs-cleared exports rose 3.7 per cent year-on-year to \$129.7 billion after a rise of 30.3 per cent to \$125 billion in 1995.

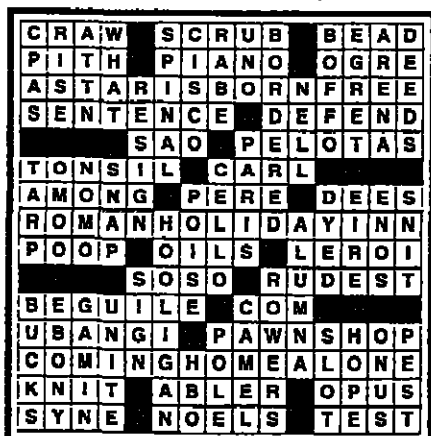
Exports to U.S., Japanese and European Union markets dropped 8.2 per cent year-on-year to \$57.3 billion in 1996 after a rise of 27.9 per cent to \$62.4 billion a year earlier, the bank said.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 Abrasion
 - 5 Type of wave
 - 10 Hops dryer
 - 14 Saint Paul's architect
 - 15 Port of northern Chile
 - 16 Pinocchio's goldfish
 - 17 Pizza complements?
 - 20 Suspenders
 - 21 Vertices
 - 22 Glacial ridges
 - 23 Wound mark
 - 24 Celebrates oneself
 - 27 Mil. addresses
 - 28 Rep.
 - 31 Wrangle
 - 32 Small weight
 - 33 Antitoxins
 - 34 Pancake make-up?
 - 37 Patella place
 - 38 '60s pop singer
 - 39 — and dined
 - 40 Alarming letters?
 - 41 Vesicle
 - 42 Italian ice cream
 - 43 Request encl.
 - 44 Post
 - 45 Emphasis
 - 48 Pheasant
 - 52 Holden
 - 53 Caulfield's vision?
 - 54 Encourage
 - 55 Controlled by
 - 56 Obstacle
 - 57 Deliver a smacker
 - 58 Jaunty
 - 59 Children



by Frederick T. Buhler



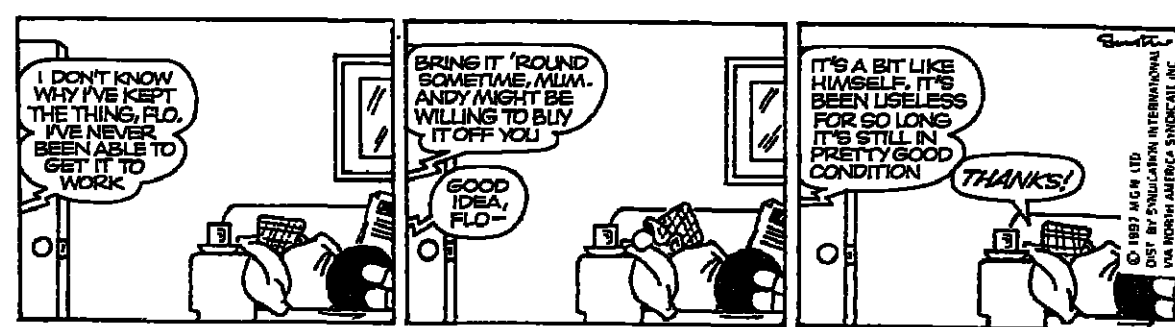
© 1997 Tribune Media Services, Inc. All rights reserved.

- DOWN**
- 1 Gulp
 - 2 Toothed cetacean
 - 3 Stagger
 - 4 Pen
 - 5 Hot condiments
 - 6 Command
 - 7 Pinches
 - 8 Here: Fr.
 - 9 Underground chamber
 - 10 Mineral pigment
 - 11 Haley
 - 12 Desiccated
 - 13 Head movement
 - 18 Ejected
 - 19 Bk. balancers
 - 23 Hall of Fame hurler, Warren
 - 24 Takes great pleasure
 - 25 Maine campus site
 - 26 Feverish attacks
 - 27 Vernacular
 - 28 Volcanic mount
 - 29 Welcome
 - 30 Slow, in music
 - 32 Appearance
 - 33 Quiet
 - 35 Homer's traveler
 - 36 Anchors
 - 41 Ready money
 - 42 "Elmer —"
 - 43 Cults
 - 44 Sources of iron
 - 45 Non-union worker
 - 46 Prohibited
 - 47 Hwy.
 - 48 Disencumbers
 - 49 Cubic Rubik
 - 50 Greenish hue
 - 51 Barrels
 - 53 Genetic letters

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Hingis destroys Seles in 44-minute final

KEY BISCAYNE (R) — In 44 sweet minutes 16-year-old Martina Hingis of Switzerland crushed Monica Seles 6-2, 6-1 in the Lipton Championships final Saturday in her last match before assuming the crown of the youngest world number one.

Currently second-ranked, the Swiss teenage sensation destroyed fifth-ranked American Seles, whose record as the world's youngest number one player she is about to eclipse.

Seles was 17 years, three months, 19 days old when she secured the top-ranked berth in March 1991. Hingis will only be 16 years, six months and one day when she takes over the top spot from the injured Steffi Graf when the latest rankings are issued Monday.

"I just played very good in this match," No. 1 seed Hingis said. "I almost didn't make one mistake, or I didn't make any. It was just a perfect match."

It was the second career drubbing that Hingis has handed Seles. In their only previous meeting, Hingis trounced Seles 6-2, 6-0 in the Oakland final last November.

"Last time I played her it was 52 minutes, now 44," Hingis said. "She made one more game this time."

Whether Hingis won the Lipton title or not, it was a foregone conclusion that she was about to become No. 1. German Graf, out of action for over a month, has held the top spot for 377 weeks.

"I felt kind of like a responsibility that I didn't want to lose first round



Martina Hingis of Switzerland returns a serve from Monica Seles of the United States in the first set at the finals of the Lipton Tennis Championships. Hingis defeated Seles 6-2, 6-1 (Reuters photo)

because I knew even if I lose first round, I'm going to become No. 1 on Monday," Hingis said after

the victory.

This year has seen a number of firsts for Hingis. She became the youngest

player to win a Grand Slam title when she won the Australian Open in January. With her \$215,000 in sin-

gles prize money and \$19,000 doubles earnings at the Lipton, Hingis becomes the fastest player to earn one million dollars in prize money in a single season.

Hingis is cruising on success this year. She's yet to lose a match and holds a 26-0 winning streak after Saturday's victory.

"Obviously the tennis she has played this year and the consistency and the amount of tournaments that she has played at that level is quite remarkable," Seles said of Hingis.

Seles was beaten with almost embarrassing ease, although it was her first tournament of the year because of a broken index finger.

"Right now, probably, I can't have the focus that I had four or five years ago," Seles said. "I'm not expecting that of myself at this point. I'm going to have it back if I just be patient and play matches and keep practicing."

Seles made 22 unforced errors to Hingis' eight.

The first three games were service breaks before Hingis held serve in the fourth game for a 3-1 lead. In the seventh game Hingis broke serve again when Seles double faulted to 0-40 and then lost the game by netting a backhand off a Hingis return.

In the second set, Seles only managed to hold serve once, in the third game, as Hingis pulled apart the game that once catapulted the naturalised American to No. 1 in the world.

Olajuwon's 45 points lead Rockets past Nuggets

HOUSTON (R) — Hakeem Olajuwon continued his dominance of the Denver Nuggets with 45 points as he led the Houston Rockets to their fifth victory in six games, 120-105.

Olajuwon, who has averaged 43 points in three games against Denver this season, made 14-of-24 shots from the field and 16-of-17 free throws. He also pulled down 11 rebounds as Houston won its third straight game.

Laphonso Ellis scored 24 points for Denver.

In Atlanta, Christian Laettner scored 24 points and the Atlanta Hawks held the Sacramento Kings to nine baskets in the second half of an 88-74 victory, their seventh straight win.

Steve Smith scored 23 points and Mookie Blaylock added 16 and 12 rebounds for the Hawks, who surrendered just 29 points in the second half and improved to 33-4 at home.

Billy Owens scored 15 points and Corliss Williamson added 13 for the Kings, who have lost 11 of their last 12 games.

In Chicago, Scottie Pippen scored 31 points and Michael Jordan added eight of his 21 in the fourth-quarter burst as the Chicago Bulls defeated the New Jersey Nets, 111-101, for their 28th straight home win.

Luc Longley added 17 points for the Bulls, who have won seven in a row. Jimmy Jackson scored a season-high 33 points and Sam Cassell added 29 for



Hakeem Olajuwon

the Nets.

In Washington, Rod Strickland scored seven of his 21 points in the fourth quarter, including four in a decisive burst, as the Washington Bullets won 94-87 over the Dallas Mavericks in their last game at the Baltimore arena.

Juwan Howard scored 20 points and pulled down eight rebounds and Chris Webber added 17 and 18 for Washington, which moved within a half-game of the Cleveland Cavaliers and the final Eastern Conference

playoff berth.

Michael Finley had 25 points and seven rebounds for Dallas, which has dropped six straight.

In San Antonio, Karl Malone poured in 33 points and the Utah Jazz exploded for 37 points in the fourth quarter to beat the San Antonio Spurs, 115-102, for their ninth straight victory.

Bryon Russell scored 18 points and Jeff Hornacek had 10 of his 15 in the final period for the Jazz, who won for the 14th time in 15 games this month.

NBA RESULTS

Atlanta	88	Sacramento	74
Washington	94	Dallas	87
Chicago	111	New Jersey	101
Houston	120	Denver	105
Utah	115	San Antonio	102

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Italy sweep ahead with golden 1,000; Romania win 8-0 as Cyprus hold Russia to 1-1 draw

PARIS (AFP) — Italy cruised to an easy 3-0 victory over Moldova in their World Cup Group 2 qualifier on Saturday and notched up their 1,000th international goal in the process.

Italy's win took them three points clear of England, who recorded a draw 2-0 win over Mexico in a friendly, and could go six points up if they beat Poland Wednesday.

In other World Cup qualifiers Denmark came back to claim a 1-1 draw away at Croatia, though they both still trail leaders Greece in Group 1. Ukraine stayed in con-

tention in Group 9 after beating Albania in Spain 1-0 while leaders Portugal, who lead Ukraine on goal difference with the latter having two games in hand, were held to a scoreless draw in northern Ireland.

Romania's sweeper Gheorghe Popescu took the scoring honours with four of his side's eight as they blitzed minnows Liechtenstein 8-0 to move five points clear of the republic of Ireland and Macedonia, who play their Group 8 match on Wednesday.

Scotland moved four points clear of Austria, whom they meet on

Wednesday, in Group 4 with a 2-0 win over Estonia but Wales disastrous campaign continued as they lost 2-1 at home to Belgium.

Belgium trail neighbours the Netherlands in Group 7 by three points after the Dutch beat whipping boys San Marino 4-0 at home.

Italy's new cap Christian Vieri scored their 1,000th goal in international football — 87 years after Pietro Lana bagged their first in a 6-2 win over France in Milan.

Team coach Cesare Maldini was the proudest father in Italy after his son Paolo, the team captain,

opened the scoring with a superb solo goal in the 24th minute.

Gianfranco Zola, whose goalscoring skills sank England at Wembley last month, added the second just before the break.

The breakthrough came in the 24th minute, when Maldini collected the ball from Zola on the left flank, accelerated between two defenders and rounded a third before sweeping home a left-foot shot from close range.

Zola was also behind his own goal 20 minutes later, feeding the ball wide to Dino Baggio, who skipped a tackle and unleashed a shot which Moldova goalkeeper Denis blocked but failed to hold.

The Chelsea striker then stepped up to drive home the rebound.

Italy made it 3-0 within four minutes of the re-start when the ball came into the area from the right. Zola's feint allowed it to find Vieri and the Juventus striker blasted home an unstoppable left-foot drive.

Glasgow Rangers star Brian Laudrup equalised for Denmark in the 82nd minute as they garnered what could prove a vital point away at Croatia, who had opened the scoring in the 50th minute as Real Madrid marksman Davor Suker shot home from Robert Jarni's cross.

The Croats should have had the match won by then but Juventus striker Alen Boksic missed from five yards out in the ninth minute, after Peter Schmeichel had saved brilliantly from Zvonimir



Dutch striker Aron Winter (R) duels for the ball with San Marino midfielder Ivan Matteoni (C) and defender Damiano Vannucci (L) during their Group 7 World Cup qualifying match in Amsterdam. The Netherlands beat San Marino 4-0 (Reuters photo)

Boban.

Schmeichel, who had been made to look very ordinary when Suker lobbed him in the final minute of their 3-0 thrashing during Euro 96, was at his best particularly when he saved from Robert Prosinecki's 30 yard shot in the 38th minute.

Albania put up a brave fight against Ukraine in their match which was played at the Estadio Nuevo Los Carnenes because of the unrest in their country.

Sergi Rebrov hit the decisive goal on 39 minutes, after they had been given a scare when

Albania's Altin Rakli 32nd minute effort was ruled out for offside.

Northern Ireland frustrated Portugal in their battling draw but Bryan Hamilton's team, needed a win to enhance their slim hopes of reaching next year's finals in France.

Portugal, who have only scored five goals in the campaign, rarely looked settled under the home side's pressure.

Home keeper Tommy Wright was kept the busiest as the match wore on, tipping over a thundering volley from Barcelona star Figo and later racing forward to block Joao

Pinto with the Irish defence ball-watching.

Holland motored to a 4-0 win with Ajax striker Patrick Kluijvert, playing in front of his home crowd, firing home the opener.

Kluijvert's Ajax teammate Frank de Boer grabbed the first of his brace on 59 minutes after playing a delightful one-two with Arsenal striker Dennis Bergkamp.

Nottingham Forest forward Pierre Van Hooijdonk, on as a late substitute for Clarence Seedorf of Real Madrid scored the third with eight minutes remaining and De Boer completed the rout in the final seconds.

First-half goals from Bertrand Crasson and Lorenzo Staelens helped Belgium to their crucial victory over Wales.

Crasson gave Belgium the lead when his 20-metre shot thudded against the crossbar and rebounded off keeper Neville Southall's back into the net.

Lorenzo Staelens made it 2-0 a minute before the break when he met Albert de Roover's left-wing cross with a downward header which crept inside Southall's right-hand post.

Gary Speed made it 2-1 with a header in the 67th minute.

Scotland boosted their chances of qualifying with a welcome win over Estonia, whom they only drew with 0-0 in Monaco in February, as Celtic defender Tommy Boyd, with his first goal in 43 international appearances, put the Scots in front after 25 minutes and an own goal from Janek meet in the second half sealed the win.

Popescu, the former Tottenham midfielder, was on target after 29 and 30 minutes after Ion Moldovan, who had a first minute effort disallowed, had hit the opener for Romania on 10 minutes.

And he then bagged a further two goals after the break to take the Romanians onto a maximum 12 points.

Gheorghe Hagi, Chelsea's Dan Petrescu and second half sub Gheorghe Craioveanu were also on target.



Cyprus's Yiannos Ioannou (R) trips over Russia's Alexander Mostovoi during their Group 5 World Cup qualifying match in Paralimni, Cyprus. The game ended in a 1-1 draw (Reuters photo)

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "1"

Kevin Bacon, Robert Deniro,
Dustin Hoffman, Jason Patrick
& Brad Pitt... in

SLEEPERS

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "2"

Ethan Hawke
& Julie Delpy.... in

BEFORE SUNRISE

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238

PLAZA

Adel Imam, Shireen
& Saeed Saleh
Bakhit Wa Adilah (2)
Al Jardal Walkankah

Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "1"

MADONNA &
ANTONIO BANDERAS...IN
EVITA

(new print)
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre
TEL: 625155

Amn.. Ya Ho

The theatre is closed every
Saturday & Sunday
For reservations call 625155



University of North Carolina forward Ademola Okulaja threads his way through two Arizona defenders in the first half during their semi-final game at the NCAA Final Four in Indianapolis. Arizona forward Eugene Edgerson (L) and center A.J. Bramlett provide the defence. The winner advances to the national championship game (Reuters photo)

NCAA-final four results

Arizona	66	North Carolina	58
Kentucky	78	Minnesota	69

Deportivo Coruna held to 1-1 draw

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain (R) — Deportivo Coruna suffered a blow to their chances of taking Spain's second European Cup place next season when they were held to a 1-1 draw at Real Sociedad on Saturday.

It was the first point Deportivo have dropped in seven matches since coach Carlos Alberto Silva joined the club last month. They are now 11 points behind Real Madrid and two behind Barcelona and Real Betis. They went behind midway through the first half when Real's Agustin Aranzabal took a quick free kick while the Deportivo players were still protesting keeper Jacques Songu's being penalised for taking too many steps.

But Real never looked likely to hang on to their lead and Brazilian midfielder Rivaldo blasted home the equaliser from a free-kick in the 65th minute.

Both sides wasted chances to clinch the game in the final half-hour.

Dubai World Cup rescheduled after desert flood

DUBAI (R) — Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Sunday rescheduled the \$4 million Dubai World Cup, the world's richest horse race, for Thursday after a thunderstorm and flash floods.

But it will be with a reduced field and less of the glitz and glamour lined up for Saturday's event which was washed out by a downpour that waterlogged the sand track and created lakes in the desert.

European champion Helissio pulled out of the field of 13 thoroughbreds chasing a \$2.4 million first prize.

After an earlier downpour last Tuesday played havoc with training, Helissio's French trainer Elie Lellouche threatened to pull out and go home if there was one drop of rain. He did so on Saturday.

The rest of the trainers met Sheikh Mohammed on Sunday and pledged to stay in Dubai for the rescheduled race.

John Gosden, trainer of Sheikh Mohammed's American bay horse Flemensfirth, said: "I don't

think that any dirt track anywhere in the world can take the amount of rain that was thrown on it yesterday."

He said the trainers were quite confident Dubai's Nad al-Sheba dirt track would be in perfect condition for racing under the floodlights on Thursday night.

Flemensfirth and all 11 other horses left in the race were out training on Sunday — at other tracks in the region.

Race committee chairman Michael Osborne said the forecast was for no more rain up to Friday. "We're confident we can get the track in condition," he said.

Saturday's storm was the one factor beyond the control of Sheikh Mohammed, crown prince of Dubai, United Arab Emirates minister of defence, and the world's most successful owner and breeder of racing thoroughbreds.

The Dubai World Cup, his brainchild, was inaugurated last year as a glittering centrepiece with all the trappings of an international event to promote Dubai's claim to be the sporting capital

of the Middle East.

Organisers said that with top class runners from Europe, the United States, Japan and Australia it would produce the world champion of all thoroughbreds.

On Saturday, as bedraggled race-goers and VIP guests sheltered from the storm, Sheikh Mohammed watched torrential rain fall on the race course.

Large tracts of desert were already awash from a heavy but less intense storm on Tuesday night that had kept the dirt track sealed until Friday morning and interfered with the training schedule.

Race officials said the event cost about \$10 million to stage. A crowd of 30,000 people, including international show business celebrities, was expected at the track and millions more racing fans in Europe, Asia and North America had been expected to tune in to satellite television casts.

Top seeds continue winning streak at Arab Table Tennis Cup

By Roufan Nahhas and Ghazi Qassas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Top seeds slated to win at the 6th Arab Table Tennis Championship currently underway at Al Hussein Sports City are no longer a surprise.

Saudi Arabia's Nabil Maghaw, Lebanon's Mohammad Al Habash, Tunisia's Mukhtar Bo Azizi, Qatar's Hamad Al Hamadi and Jordan's Abdul Aziz Rida booked their ticket to the semi-finals after their second day victories.

In the women's singles Lebanon's Larissa Shoaib and Jocelyn Track, Tunisia's Afaf Nowar and Nadia Losiaf and Jordan's Alia Tufaha are still favourites to reach the semi-finals.

The absence of the Egyptian team — considered one of the Arab World's best and known for their advanced form and tactics — has boosted the chances of players of the nine participating countries.

On the sidelines of the championship, Vice-President of the Arab Table Tennis Federation (ATTF) and President of the Lebanese Table Tennis

Federation George Hani said that Lebanon will organise an international championship for women scheduled to take place Oct. 23-27 with over JD 30,000 in prize money. Mr. Hani added that the ATTF proposal to the International Table Tennis Federation for establishing a school for table tennis supervised by Chinese trainers and experts to upgrade the game in the Arab World was still under study by the Chinese Olympic Committee.

Men's singles results:

•Abdul Aziz Rida (Jordan) — Aref Abdul Rahman (Qatar) 21-11/21-19
•Osama Al Mak (Sudan) — Raed Sharif (Palestine) 21-14/19-21/21-8
•Mukhtar Bo Azizi (Tunisia) — Isam Al Tabawi (Morocco) 21-15/21-7
•Nabil Al Maghaw (Saudi Arabia) — Mustafa Rida (Jordan) 19-21/21-14/21-16
•Shibr Al Awami (Saudi Arabia) — Mohammad Al Habash (Lebanon) 21-17/21-20
•Iyad Maknay (Jordan) — Amer Barakat (Syria) 21-13/19-21/21-17

•Al Basheer Ben Abdullah (Tunisia) — Radi Sharif (Palestine) 21-10/24-22
•Hamad Al Hamadi (Qatar) — Mustafa Rimali (Morocco) 21-18/21-14
•Hamad Al Hamadi (Qatar) — Basheer Ben Abdullah (Tunis) 21-8/21-13
•Aref Abdul Rahman (Qatar) — Raed Sharif (Palestine) 21-10/21-18
•Iyad Maknay (Jordan) — Mustafa Rimali (Morocco) 20-22/21-12
•Mohammad A Habash (Lebanon) — Radi Sharif (Palestine) 21-17/21-16
•Shibr Al Awami (Tunisia) — Amer Barakat (Syria) 21-18/21-19
•Abdul Aziz Rida (Jordan) — Isam Bitawi (Morocco) 21-12/21-11
•Mustafa Rida (Jordan)

— Osama Al Mak (Sudan) 21-16/21-16
•Mukhtar Bo Azizi (Tunisia) — Nabil Maghaw (Saudi Arabia) 13-21/21-16/21-19

Women's singles results:

•Alia Tufaha (Jordan) — Riham Halaq (Palestine) 21-14/21-12
•Afaf Nowar (Tunis) — Suha Anous (Syria) 21-17/21-18
•Hadia Abu Sham (Syria) — Hadeel Awad (Jordan) 21-12/10-21/21-17

15
•Nadia Losiaf (Tunisia) — Hanadi Tufaha (Jordan) 21-17/21-14
•Nadia Losiaf (Tunisia) — Hadeel Awad (Jordan) 21-13/21-15
•Jocelyn Track (Lebanon) — Hanadi Tufaha (Jordan) 21-15/21-7
•Alia Tufaha (Jordan) — Afaf Nowar (Tunis) 21-16/21-17
•Larissa Shoaib (Lebanon) — Suha Anous (Syria) 19-21/21-15/21-17

Deluxe Furnished Flat For Rent

In a two-floor building, behind Tyche Hotel in a quiet area. Consists of 3 bedrooms (one master), 3 bathrooms, living room, salon, dining room and kitchen. It has a private covered garage, water well, separate central heating, telephone, intercom and elevator.
Please call 664082, Fadi

Salah Kawasmi & Sons Co. For Cars & Heavy Equipment

Announces the arrival of new Mercedes E200 Elegance cars, model 1997, of different colours & with full options. Competitive prices.

For information, call 09/916364 — Zarqa Free Zone



Inauguration Day

AMERICAN CLOSE OUT

AMERICAN CLOSE OUT

NOW IN

Jabal Al-Husseini

Adel Al-Qasbi Center

Tel. 601315

Shoes - Clothes - Brand Names

Receiving you daily from

10 a.m. up to 10 p.m. in all branches

AL-Swafiah - Telefax 862079

Abdullah Ghushel - Tel. 858637

Jaber Complex - Tel. 821588

Jabal Al-Husseini - Tel. 601315



JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES CO. LTD.

ANNOUNCES THE INVITATION TO TENDER No.: 18F/97

JPMC announces the invitation to bid No.: 18F/97 for the:

((Replacement of two package steam boilers of 100 T/ Hr each by new ones including design, manufacture, supply, erection and commissioning of the two new boilers)).

The tender documents are available at JPMC offices in Amman, supply department, until 2:00 p.m. local time Wednesday, 30th April, 1997.

Application for documents should be accompanied by a non-refundable fee of JD (200) for each set of tender documents.

The closing date for submitting bids is 12:00 hours local time Monday, 2nd June, 1997.

Sameh Madani
Managing Director

JORDAN TIMES TEL:

699634, 684311

Deluxe Ground Floor Apartment For Rent

Fully furnished ground floor apartment of 3-4 bedrooms with big garden of 300m2, large salons, spacious built-in kitchen, European style furniture, separate telephone line & number, independent utilities (W & E & Ch), TV, video & satellite. Nicely located in Um Utheina.

For more information call Tel. No. 079-47791 or 5518049

USA INCOME TAX

ARE YOU A U.S.A. CITIZEN OR RESIDENT?
HAVE YOU FILED YOUR TAXES YET?
WE PREPARE USA INCOME TAX RETURNS.
CALL US FOR FREE CONSULTATION.

MARC A. SHABAN, CPA
079-41908



MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

Are you interested in study at one of the UK's most popular universities where international students have enjoyed a long tradition success? The university of Middlesex offers students internationally recognised degree qualifications that enhance job prospects and professional status. To find out more you are invited to attend a presentation and counselling sessions with Prof. Muthana Jabbar and Ms Lesley Markes.

The British Council

Presentation: Wednesday 2nd April 1997, 6.00 pm

Counselling: Thursday 3rd April 1997, 10.00 am - 2.00 pm (please phone 636147 / 8 to make an appointment for the counselling session).

40% OFF

on all winter & summer clothes

Offer valid until 9th. April

AUTHORIZED DEALER OF Calvin Klein

Opening hours: 10 - 1.30 & 3.30 - 8 p.m.

RA'FAT CENTER - ABDOUN - TEL. 858116

JONES NEW YORK - WALKER & CO. MILANO

Tensions shroud Jerusalem Easter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Hundreds of pilgrims on Easter Sunday prayed in Jerusalem, the site of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, but Israeli-Palestinian tensions kept many tourists away from the holy land.

"Many evils are surrounding us. The main one is the absence of peace," Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, a Palestinian, said in an Easter message in Jerusalem.

"Blood is still unfortunately being shed. Violence is still in the hearts and blindness concerning the rights of others is still in the minds of leaders," the Roman Catholic leader said.

Patriarch Sabbah performed Easter mass in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre as clouds of incense wafted above the shrine.

Clouds of tear-gas hung over parts of the West Bank where clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians protesting against Israeli settlement in Arab East Jerusalem flared for the 11th consecutive day.

In the church, pilgrims from all over the world watched as Palestinian guards, clad in royal blue embroidered Turkish costumes, tapped silver canes on ancient stones to clear the way for the patriarch's procession.

But crowds were thinner than on past Easter holidays and most Palestinian shops were shuttered in Arab East Jerusalem in support of an annual Israeli Arab protest against seizure of land by the government.

"Tourists stayed away this year because of the tensions," Wajeh Nuseibeh, Muslim custodian and doorkeeper of the Christian shrine, told Reuters.

Industry officials say tourism is down 15 to 18 per cent during the peak season around Easter and passover, the Jewish holiday next month marking the biblical exodus from Egypt.

Analysts attribute the slump to a wave of suicide bombings that killed 59 last year and fierce Israeli-Palestinian gunbattles in September that affected advance bookings for the two holidays.

The new flareup has done little to ease the anxieties of potential visitors.

But pilgrims who came despite the troubles shrugged off the tension.

"Jesus died and was resurrected here for our sins," Keith Phillips, from England, told Reuters. "I need to be here because we need him more than ever."

Patriarch Sabbah blasted an Israeli closure of the West Bank, tightened after a militant killed three Israeli women in a Tel Aviv suicide bombing nine days ago, for preventing Palestinian Christians from entering Jerusalem.

"The Holy City, the place of all the holy events... is still the main cause for the absence of peace," Patriarch Sabbah said. "It is still for security reasons forbidden for our believers."

He said Jerusalem, claimed by Israel as its "eternal and indivisible capital," should have a "unique and special status" guaranteeing its holiness and sovereignty.

"Sharing the city is the only way to peace," Patriarch Sabbah said.

Israeli troops detain two Gaza fishermen

GAZA (R) — Israeli forces arrested two Gaza Strip fishermen in Gaza on Sunday and briefly surrounded a fishing boat off the Gaza coast demanding they be allowed to search it, Palestinian police said.

The Israeli army said it was checking the report.

Palestinian police captain Khalid Abu Al Ila told Reuters some 50 Israeli soldiers raided Fisherman's Square in Khan Younis in the Strip and arrested two fishermen.

Capt. Ila said he had demanded that Palestinian forces join the Israelis surrounding the fishing boat to detain the situation but said the Israelis initially refused to cooperate.

A short while later the Israeli changed their minds, Capt. Ila said, and both forces dealt with the boat.

"The Israelis agreed to our demand and we searched the boat in front of them and it was clear that there was nothing suspicious," he told Reuters.

Capt. Ila said the Israelis then allowed the boat with its six Palestinian fishing crew to proceed on its way. The two men arrested earlier were still in Israeli custody.

Capt. Ila said he still did not know why Israel arrested the two fishermen or had insisted on a search of the boat. He said tensions raised by the Israeli acts, which he called "provocations," had eased when the boat was released.

Under the deal setting up Palestinian self-rule in much of the Gaza Strip, Israel retains ultimate control over borders and at sea. There are also areas on land, like Fisherman's Square, where Israel has ultimate security control.

Falasha victim of Israeli racist abuse in military forces

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Ethiopian Jew serving with an elite unit of the Israeli army was hauled out of a military clinic and subjected to a tirade of racist abuse by a superior officer, Israeli radio reported Sunday.

The radio said the captain shouted at the Ethiopian Jewish soldier, in front of a doctor and several nurses, that "blacks did not have the right to medical care," said the radio.

The officer then shouted at colleagues in the clinic, in the Mount Hermon region of the Golan Heights, that "a sign should be put up at the entrance specifying that blacks were banned from entering."

Staff in the clinic reported the incident and the captain was severely reprimanded by a tribunal, said the radio. Shai Bazak, spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said the premier was "scandalised" by the incident, which took place around a month ago.

Three soldiers from Israel's 60,000-strong Ethiopian community have committed suicide since the beginning of the month, and community leaders say racism is endemic in the Jewish state's armed forces.

Labour Deputy Adissu Massala, the first Ethiopian Jew elected to parliament, accused the army of "cultivating discrimination against Ethiopian Jews."

For centuries Ethiopian Jews, also known as Falasha, lived separately from the rest of the Jewish diaspora, and the Israeli rabbinate took a long time to recognise their Jewishness. Most came to Israel in two airlifts in 1984 and 1991.

However, many Ethiopian Jews came from a poor rural background and found the culture shock of modern Israel difficult to handle.

Many complain of racism and unemployment.



FAREWELL: The sister of Abdullah Khalil Salah, who was killed in Ramallah on Saturday, takes a last farewell of her brother who lies in the family's home in Beit Sahour on Sunday (AFP photo)

Iraq calls on UAE and S. Arabia to restore ties

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Iraq's foreign minister urged the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia on Sunday to restore diplomatic links with Baghdad, ostracised since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Mohammad Al Sahaf said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had sent letters to UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan thanking him for calling on other Arab states to break crippling international sanctions on Baghdad.

"We hope there will be more moves from the UAE in this regard. On the bilateral level, we hope there will be steps to reopen the two embassies in Baghdad and Abu Dhabi," Mr. Sahaf told the UAE daily Al Itihad.

"Most Arab countries which had strained ties with Iraq have restored relations. We hope the rest will follow suit, especially Saudi Arabia."

Iraq was ostracised by several Arab countries after its forces occupied Kuwait in a lightning offensive on Aug. 2, 1990.

But some of them, including Qatar, have reconciled with Baghdad and called for ending the sanctions imposed by the United Nations after the invasion.

Sheikh Zayed, 80, appealed twice last year for breaking the embargo against Iraq while the official UAE media launched a virulent attack in December against the United Nations for maintaining the sanctions.

The UAE has also sent official and private aid shipments to Iraq and more supplies are planned.

Dubai, the second biggest UAE emirate, has also set up a sea link with the Iraqi port of Basra as more officials exchanged visits.

"We hope to open a trade centre in Dubai soon," Mr. Sahaf said. "The UAE position is a sincere Arab position, which we hope will develop to become more practical."

Food shipments arrive

Iraq has taken delivery of 1,500 tonnes of salt from Jordan, the first of scores of approved contracts to be completed under the oil-for-food deal with the United Nations, U.N. officials said Sunday.

"A total of 65 trucks have transported all the (salt) to Baghdad, the first contract to be fulfilled," a U.N. official told AFP in Baghdad on condition of anonymity. He said the last truck arrived Saturday.

At least 45 contracts among hundreds submitted by Iraq have been approved by the U.N. Sanctions committee, but only five have started to be implemented.

The four others involve the delivery of Thai rice, two contracts for white beans and chick peas via Turkey and another involving the shipment of cooking oil through Turkey.

Hundreds of trucks have crossed from Turkey with the items since the U.N. deal began being implemented March 20, while a Chinese ship delivered 13,000 tonnes of Thai rice to the Gulf port of Umm Qasr last Wednesday.

Most of the ship's cargo has been unloaded since then.

At least nine ships carrying 250,000 tonnes of Australian and French wheat are due to dock at Umm Qasr in the first half of April.

No date has been announced yet for the start of distribution to Iraq's 20 million people.

The Iraqi government has complained deliveries have taken too long since the humanitarian deal with the United Nations went into force on Dec. 10 when Baghdad resumed oil exports for the first time in six years.

Under the terms of the deal, the first easing of sanctions since they were imposed in August 1990, Iraq can export \$2 billion of oil in six months.

The proceeds are earmarked for purchases of humanitarian goods but are also being used to defray U.N. costs and compensate victims of the invasion.

Medicine as well as toilet soap, detergents, educational supplies and equipment for power plants and sewage treatment plants are also allowed under the deal enshrined in U.N. Resolution 986.

A full lifting of the oil and trade sanctions cannot take place until the United Nations is satisfied Iraq has come clean on its banned weapons programmes.

Lebanese Hizbollah denies reported network in Canada

BEIRUT (R) — The pro-Iranian Hizbollah movement has denied a Canadian intelligence agency report that it has a network in Canada guided by its leadership in Beirut.

A statement faxed to an international news agency in Beirut late on Saturday said: "We deny all claims that there is an organisation in Canada guided by the leadership of the party in Lebanon."

"We deny any party involvement in the bombing of Saudi Arabia and we consider all that was published about the party in this regard as completely false and aimed at defaming Hizbollah's struggle against the Israeli occupation," the statement added.

The accusation came in a document by Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) filed with the federal court of Canada in a deportation case involving Saudi dissident Hani Abdul Rahim Al Sayegh.

The document, published on Saturday by the Globe and Mail newspaper in Toronto, was quoted as saying that "the Saudi Hizbollah is active in Canada."

Agency spokesman Gaetan Blais

told AFP: "But of course it doesn't go into details about their activities."

The document shows "Hizbollah has established an infrastructure in Canada that can assist and support members in Canada seeking a safe haven in North America," according to the Globe and Mail. It says Hizbollah members in Canada "receive and comply with direction from the Hizbollah leadership hierarchy in Lebanon."

The document also says that a man arrested three years ago "ultimately admitted to being a member of Hizbollah."

"He further admitted that the terrorist group operates in Canada," the paper said.

CSIS alleged that Sayegh — who was arrested in Ottawa on March 18 on the grounds that he represented a security threat to Canada — was involved in a bombing in Saudi Arabia last June that killed 19 U.S. airmen and wounded nearly 400 people.

The bombing was the work of a group called Saudi Hizbollah, whose actions are supported by the Lebanese-based Hizbollah group, the newspaper quoted the CSIS document as saying.

CSIS has said the Saudis found a detonator at the site of the bombing similar to a kind used in the past by the Lebanese Hizbollah. Hizbollah, which leads a guerrilla war on Israeli forces in South Lebanon, The spy agency has asked federal court Judge Donna McGillis to determine whether or not Sayegh "constitutes a threat to Canada's national security" meaning he could be deported.

Sayegh was spotted conducting surveillance at the U.S. base before the June 1996 attack, and drove a car that was recorded signalling the bomb truck to enter the Khobar base grounds.

The spy agency said that Sayegh arrived in Canada in August 1996 after travelling through Kuwait, Italy and the United States.

He claimed refugee status, arguing that he was subject to religious persecution, although according to the documents this was a ploy "to avoid detection and arrest by Saudi Arabian authorities."

Sayegh will be called to testify at an April 28 hearing.

Qatar ready to close trade office in Israel

CAIRO (AFP) — Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad Ben Jabr Al Thani said Sunday that his country was ready to shut down its trade mission in Israel if the Arab League adopted calls to freeze normalisation with the Jewish state.

"We have effectively frozen relations with Israel six months ago. We have no diplomatic ties. We have a trade mission in Israel but no trade relations," he said ahead of a meeting of Arab League foreign ministers here Sunday.

"If the Arab League decides to freeze normalisation with Israel, Qatar is ready to comply" and shut its mission there, the foreign minister said.

Arab League foreign ministers were meeting Sunday and Monday in Cairo to discuss measures to deal with Israel after it went ahead with a controversial plan to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The Arab League meeting comes after an Islamic summit in Pakistan and the members of the Jerusalem Committee, recommended a freeze in normalisation with Israel.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) committee recommended Thursday that countries which have moved closer to Israel since the peace process was launched in 1991 close their missions in the Jewish state.

Qatar and Oman have trade missions in Israel while Egypt and Jordan have both signed peace treaties with the Jewish state.

Egypt reviews travel rules

Egypt is examining measures to restrict the number of its young people travelling to Israel, and will carry out a census of those working in the Jewish state or married to Israeli women, parliamentary sources said on Sunday.

"The Egyptian Foreign Ministry has decided to set up a committee of experts from the foreign, defence, labour, interior and justice ministry to study steps to restrict the number of youths travelling to Israel," one source said.

"Foreign Minister Amr Musa said in a report to the People's Assembly (parliament) that the committee agreed in cooperation with the Egyptian embassy in

Tel Aviv to tally up the number of Egyptian youths working in Israel and those married to Israeli women in the light of the negative effects this has on Egypt's national security," the source added.

In the future, the security services should be consulted before any Egyptian travels to Israel in order to take the necessary steps and restrictions, the sources added.

The number of Egyptian visitors to Israel has dramatically decreased in recent years from 30,000 in 1995 to 13,000 for the first 10 months in 1996, according to the Israeli embassy in Cairo.

Egyptian security services at the Rafah border post "have been pushing back for the past six months Egyptians who try to travel to Israel on their own, namely those looking for a job there," the manager of a travel agency which organises Egyptian travel to Israel said in December.

UAE urges firm stand

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) president urged Arab states on Sunday to adopt a firm stand against Israel.

Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, addressing his new cabinet in a swearing-in ceremony, said there would be no peace in the Middle East without the return of Arab East Jerusalem.

"The challenges besetting the peace process require a firm position by the Arab Nation," the 80-year-old leader said.

"There should be no compromise on rights and land because a peace which is based on concessions is rejected even though Israel freezes the negotiations for several years."

Sheikh Zayed, whose country has been reluctant to normalise relations with Israel, said the UAE would continue its support for Palestinians until they "regain their rights on their land."

"Israel must revise its attitude, abandon its settlement policies and respect the agreements it signed with the Palestinians. It must realise that returning rights to their owners is the only means to achieve security and peace," he said.

Fujimori reiterates refusal to free rebels

LIMA (AFP) — Responding to a renewed hard line by leftist hostage-takers, President Alberto Fujimori on Sunday rejected the idea of freeing jailed rebels in exchange for the 72 captives at the Japanese ambassador's home.

"The framework in which we are working is... not to accept the release of any of them (the rebels)," Mr. Fujimori told Freuencia Latina Television in a taped interview.

Rebel leader Nestor Cerna Caratini dashed optimism Saturday about a deal to end the crisis, saying that as long as the government refuses the key rebel demand to free jailed rebels, "a peaceful solution is a long way off."

Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rebels stormed the embassy residence Dec. 17 to demand that their 440 or so jailed comrades be freed.

Mr. Cerna also said an offer of asylum for the hostage-takers would not end the crisis. "We have not come here looking for asylum," he said.

As the public debate continued, the 72 high-profile hostages spent their third major Christmas holiday at the hands of the MRTA, and Red Cross officials said they would mark Easter Sunday with chocolate eggs.

In their latest comments, Cerna and Mr. Fujimori rejected the two main points of a proposed plan reportedly presented by mediators to both sides.

The reported deal would

include freedom from jail for a select number of MRTA members and asylum in Cuba or the Dominican republic for the hostage-takers, as well as payment of a "war tax" to the guerrillas.

The last point, too, was apparently discarded from the negotiations. "It is my understanding that there is no insistence on that issue," Mr. Fujimori said. Still, he was relatively optimistic about a negotiated solution to the crisis.

"There are still several points that need to be ironed out," he said, before government negotiator Domingo Palermo will meet face-to-face with rebel leaders.

The president declined to say when the talks would take place, but discarded the possibility the new encounter could come as soon as Monday.

There have been no direct talks between the rebels and the government since March 12.

Key mediator Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani said Saturday progress had been made in the talks, but added that some hardline sectors of Peruvian society were trying to "destroy" the advances with "cheap simplistic policies."

"There is always a small light on the horizon (but) there are people who take it upon themselves to destroy it," he said. The comments appeared to be a reference to the military, which wields considerable influence in Peru.

COLUMN

Rodman gets 'worst-dress' award

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Basketball's enfant terrible Dennis Rodman won the distinction as the "worst-dressed man" and the "worst-dressed woman" in a cable television report on last week's Oscars awards. Rodman, known for his cross-dressing antics as much as his basketball prowess, was named worst dressed in both categories by one of two hosts of the El Entertainment Television broadcast. The other host named MTV presenter Jenny McCarthy as the worst-dressed woman, with the worst-dressed man "whatever man was under Jenny McCarthy's dress." Tom Cruise and Mel Gibson were selected as the best-dressed men with the best-dressed women honours going to Goldie Hawn, Helen Hunt and Lauren Holly.

Bangladeshi rival attends wedding

DHAKA (AFP) — Bangladesh's two top women politicians put their often intense rivalry aside to discuss family matters and attend a wedding, press reports said. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Khaleda Zia, in their first meeting in nine months, joined the wedding reception Friday for Zia's second son, Arifat Rahman, and his bride Syeda Shamula Tabassum sparking near incredulity from the press. Running a picture of the two smiling women, the Akker Kagoj newspaper added the caption: "Not a file a picture, but yesterday's." The two, who have dominated Bangladesh's politics for the past six years, have rarely spoken to each other since Zia became premier in 1991. Sheikh Hasina became premier in June 1996 after a bitter two-year campaign against her rival. The Dhaka press welcomed the meeting at a time when relations between the ruling Awami League and Zia's main opposition Nationalist Party were at a low point. The two reportedly ignored politics for the evening and instead enjoyed the dinner together enquiring about each other's families.

Kennedy indifferent to ex-wife's book

SPRINGFIELD (AP) — U.S. Representative Joseph P. Kennedy II says voters must decide for themselves if the unflattering portrait of him in his ex-wife's book should affect his possible run for governor. Sheila Rauch Kennedy writes that he often called her "a nobody" and referred to the annulment he sought as "Catholic gobbledey-gook." She said she was afraid of him, although she described him as a fine father for their two children in "Shattered Faith: A Woman's Struggle to Stop the Catholic Church from Annulment Marriage." The book is due out in May. Asked Friday if the book might hurt his chances in a gubernatorial race, Kennedy said, "I don't know. People will have to make their own judgments." Kennedy, who has remained, is the son of the late Robert F. Kennedy.

Rapper held on arms charge

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Gangster Rapper Spice 1 has been arrested and charged with carrying a concealed weapon. The rapper, whose real name is Robert L. Jones, was a passenger in a car that was stopped for speeding Thursday in St. Louis county. Police said Jones appeared to push something under the front seat as the officer approached the car. It turned out to be a pistol, police said. Jones, 26, of Salida, California, was released on \$3,000 bond. He had been in the St. Louis area for a radio station promotion. As Spice 1, Jones has recorded two hard-edged, pessimistic albums for Jive Records in Los Angeles.